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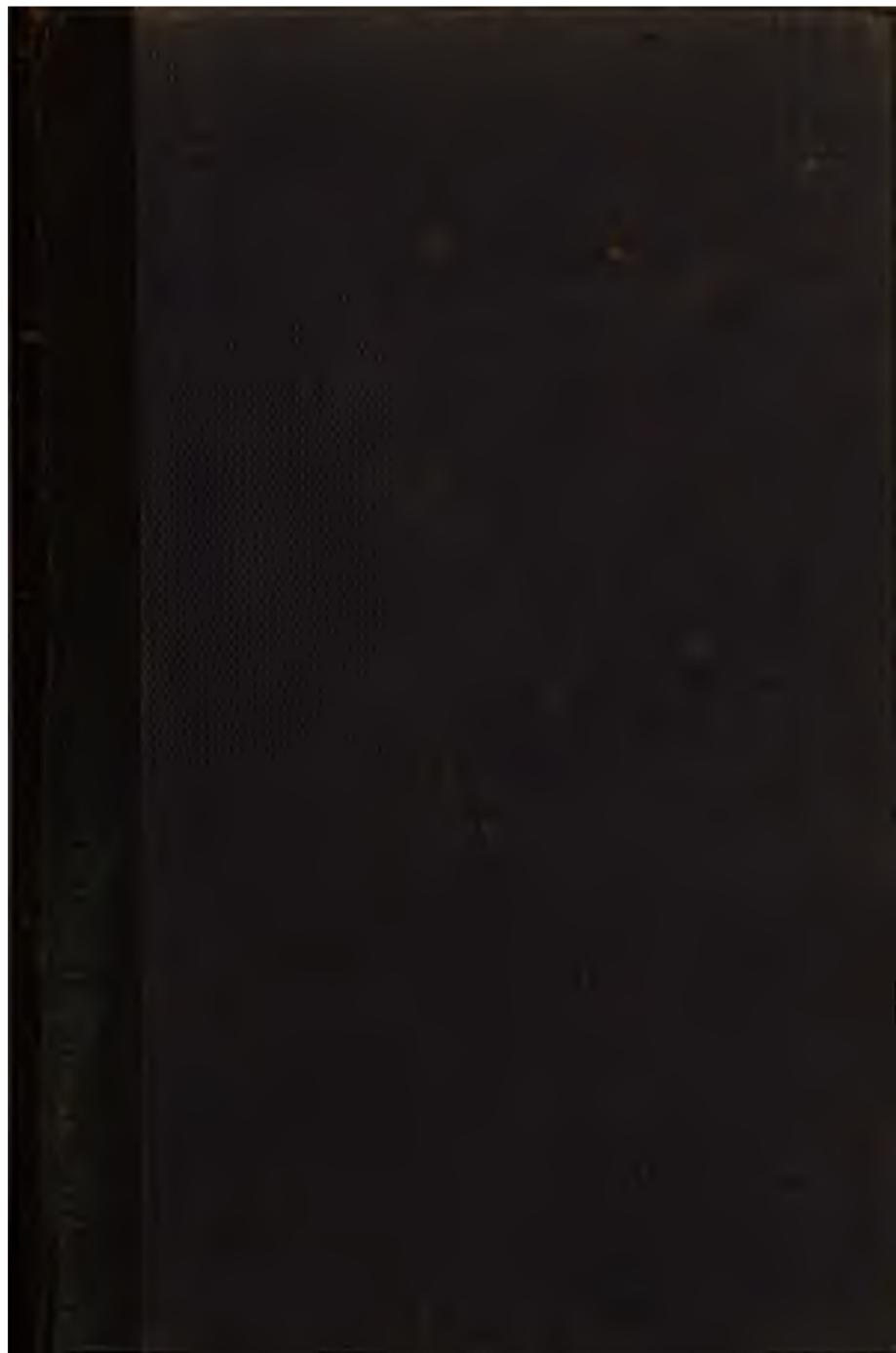
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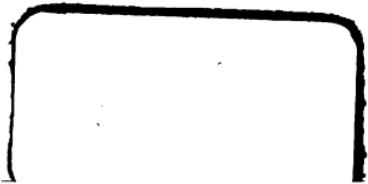
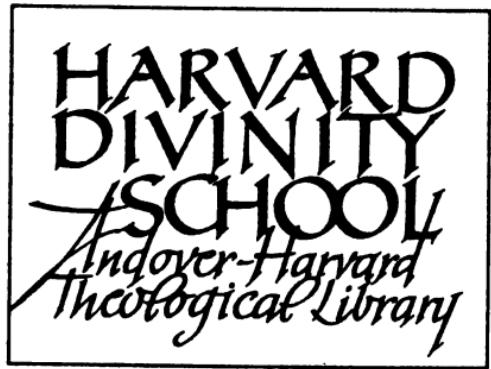
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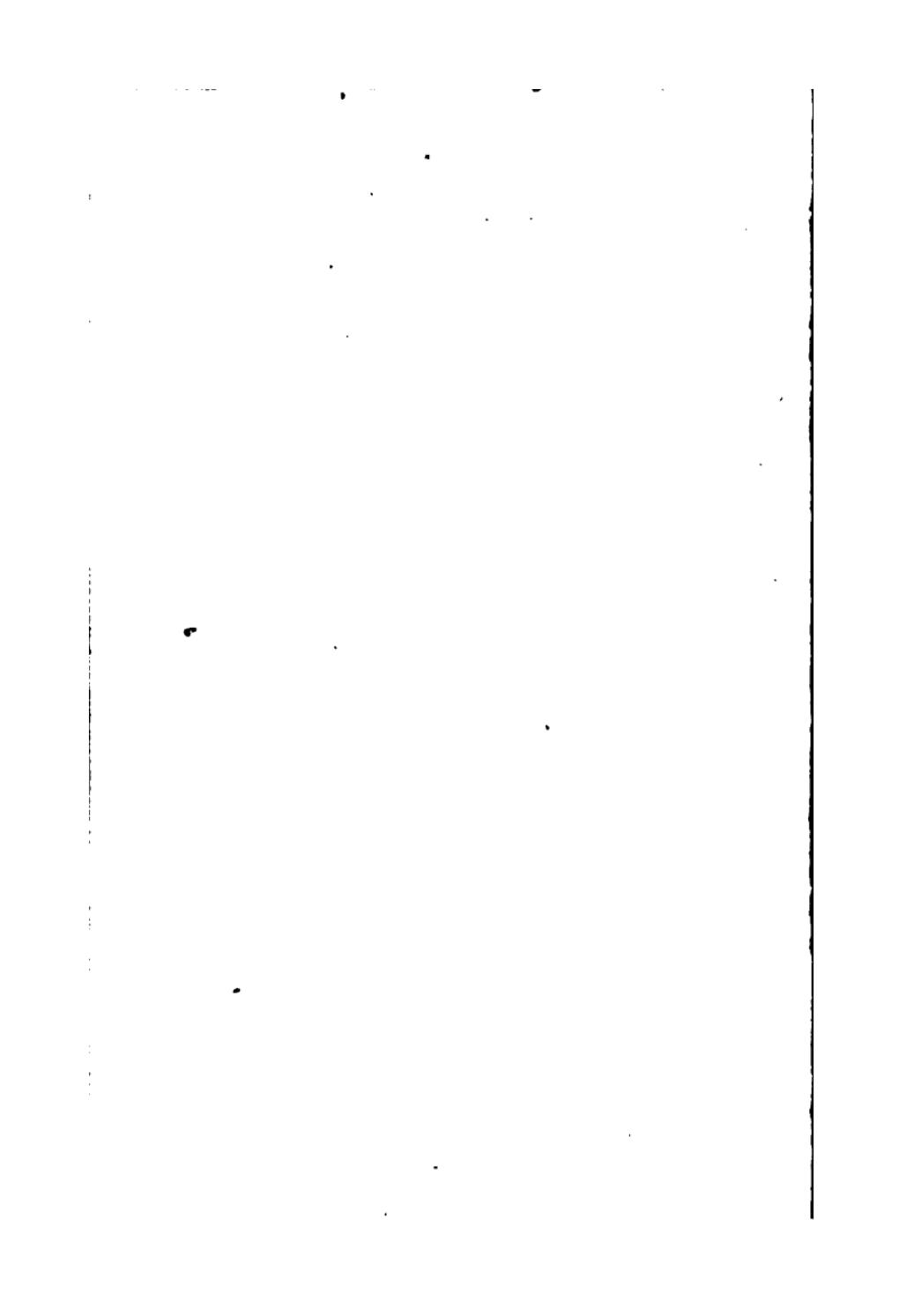
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Burdett Fanc'd

24th A 1850

Samuel Elden

1911. 12. 11.

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THE  
CHURCH MEMBER'S BOOK:

OR

ADMONITIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
ALL CLASSES OF CHRISTIANS.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I. EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

PART II. THE CHURCH—AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS  
IN THE CHURCH.

PART III. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS, ARISING FROM  
THEIR CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

BY A FREE-WILL BAPTIST.

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in  
the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar  
and ground of the truth."—1 Tim. 3:15.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE repeated revivals of religion within the last few years have often suggested to the mind of the Author of the following pages, the necessity of a book which should clearly present the duties of religion in practical life, and especially the duties of Christians in the church. In revivals in which he has labored, he has deeply regretted that he has had no suitable book, with sentiments congenial to the views of his denomination, which he might put into the hands of the converts, that should assist them onward in the Divine life.

Not a few churches are destitute of pastors; consequently there are many Christians who are not properly instructed into their duties as church members; many who do not know fully "how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church." Hence disorders of the most serious nature have soon followed the most interesting revivals. These facts have suggested to the Author the idea of preparing this work, which in the outset he commenced more for his own benefit, that he might the better present the subjects contained in it to his own congregation. But this did not seem to be all that was wanted; and he has been induced to enlarge them, and present them in the present form to the churches, hoping that in so doing he might be able, in some measure, to supply what was deemed a want in our Zion.

In presenting the following pages, the author would remark, that Part. I. is principally the re-

sult of his own experience and personal observation. In Part II. he is indebted for many valuable thoughts to J. A. James' 'Church Member's Guide'—and chapter 3d of Part III. is mostly taken from Dr. Wayland's Elements of Moral Science.

It may be asked, "Why add another book to the great number already published?" To this the author replies:—1. There are many good books already before the public; but it is believed that no author, who is not a Free-will Baptist, would prepare a work so well adapted to the views of the denomination, as one of their own number—their manner of conducting religious meetings, their views of the improvement of gifts, and of church government, being in several respects peculiar to themselves as a people:—And 2. The times have materially changed within a few years, which suggests many new thoughts, not contained in works already issued, of which young and inexperienced Christians should be apprised. Though this little book has been prepared more particularly in reference to the wants of the Free-will Baptist communion, it cannot but be hoped that all members of other denominations who may read it will derive both instruction and benefit therefrom.

The author asks this one request of his readers, that on commencing to read this book they will, in their closet of prayer, humbly seek God's blessing upon the perusal. The work is now submitted to the churches, with the ardent prayer that the God in whom the writer hopes for salvation, will make it a blessing to all its readers, and that Christians may better understand their duties in the church and to the world.

THE AUTHOR.

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## PART I.

### EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

#### THE EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.

REGENERATION, or ‘being born again,’ is the work of the Holy Spirit, by which a change of heart is experienced, and a holy disposition is implanted in the soul. This being essential to salvation, John 3:3, is a matter of infinite importance to every man. The change in regeneration consists in restoring the image of God upon the heart; the implanting of a principle in the soul to love God with all the mind, and to render obedience to his will, as the rule of right and the highest good of man. The inspired writers have employed different terms to express this work of grace. It is called “passing from death unto life,” 1 John 3:14—“a new creation,” 2 Cor. 5:17—represented under the figure of the ‘resurrection,’ Eph. 2:1; and as “putting off the old man, and putting on the new man,” which “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,” Eph. 4:22, 24—“Christ formed in the heart, the hope of glory,” Gal. 4:12—a “partaking of the divine nature,” 2 Pet. 1:4. It is effected by the word of God, gaining an entrance into the heart, through the influence of the Holy Spirit by faith, so as to subdue the will and reign supremely in the soul.

Perhaps no question was ever asked with greater anxiety than this—“Am I a child of God?” No oth-

er inquiry awakens deeper solicitude of soul. Being a point of infinite moment, it should be settled without delay, and settled on a right foundation. None who have indulged a hope in the pardoning mercy of God, should dare rest, until they obtain clear and full evidence of thorough conversion. This evidence may be obtained by faith and obedience and prayer; for we cannot suppose that God would leave a subject of such vital importance to his children without making the path plain. What, then, are the evidences of regeneration?

1. This work of grace is evinced by true heart-felt penitence. Surely, any person who has had a just sense of the exceeding sinfulness of his sins, though he may now possess the consciousness that they are all removed by the blood of Christ, will say with Job, "I abhor myself." While he recounts his past transgressions, he can exclaim with propriety—

"My lips with shame my sins confess,  
Against thy law, against thy grace:  
Lord, should thy judgments grow severe,  
I am condemned, but thou art clear."

Those born of God are not only penitent in view of their sins, but while contemplating the mercy and dying of the adorable Redeemer, their hearts are melted into tenderness before him; and as they gaze upon the cross, the language of their subdued spirits is—

"Alas! and did my Savior bleed,  
And did my sovereign die?  
Would he devote that sacred head  
For such a worm as I?"

Was it for crimes that I had done  
He groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity! grace unknown,  
And love beyond degree!"

2. Humility is another sign of regeneration. The truly converted soul looks upon himself with deep self-abasement, especially as he contemplates a holy God. He will love the holy image in his devoted people, and

as Paul commanded, "esteem others better than himself." Humility does not consist in degrading one's self; nor in giving to everybody else, whether right or wrong, a preference above ourselves. It is the opposite of attributing to ourselves qualities which do not belong to us, over-rating what we do, or taking an immoderate delight in ourselves. It is a proper sense of our many imperfections; and a cheerful readiness to ascribe all we have and are to Christ. True humility brings the proud ambition of man under proper restrictions; the heart into a state not to indulge in envy or jealousy of others; allays the unhallowed fire of human passions; and makes its possessor modest in dress and appearance, and yielding in conversation. It chooses a good name rather than a great one; commanding itself to every man's conscience. In the sight of God, it is of great price among all the virtues that render lovely the Christian character. God will impart grace to the humble; James 4:6. Reader, examine thy heart. Dost thou possess this evidence of true regeneration? Mark its importance in the church, and keep ever before the mind the illustrations Christ gave of it to his disciples in doctrine; and to the world by his life; and let it adorn thy life as a mantle.

3. A tender conscience fearing to sin. Sin looks exceeding sinful to those who have been 'born again.' For the least transgression, or slightest neglect of known duty, their conscience is 'wounded.' An evil or seared conscience is a striking evidence that there is a want of grace in the heart; so a tender conscience, fearing to sin, hating sin, is evidence that the spirit of God has touched the heart, renewed and sanctified the soul. The Psalmist could say, "I hate every false way—Ye that love the Lord hate evil;" and Solomon, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." God's people are commanded to "hate the evil, and love the good"—to "abhor that which is evil." As we cannot serve God and mammon, so we cannot love God and sin at the same time. Alas for those who wish to be esteem-

ed as saints, and reckoned with the followers of Christ, who are in love with the amusements of the ungodly, attend their meetings of recreation, and join with them in sinful mirth ! Christians do not so read their Bible —they did not so receive Christ. All believers will remember that in the days of their “first love,” their conscience was tender, and faithfully reproved them for the least sin ; and if now, as Israel looked back to Egypt for the ‘onions and leeks,’ any are half inclined to join in the folly of the world, let such know either that they have never been truly regenerated, or have fallen away from their *first love*. O reader, deceive not yourself ! God requires *the heart*—the supreme affections ; and if you do not so yield your heart to him as to hate all manner of sin, then indeed you have reason to fear. Examine yourself.

4. Love of the Holy Scriptures. Many have a regard for the Bible, who possess no true love of its Author. Some esteem it for its important history, its truthful biography, its splendid poetry, or sublimity of its style. The Christian loves the Bible because it is God’s word. It reveals his will, publishes the atonement, tells him how he may live a holy life, and glorify God. He loves it as a light to his feet and a lamp to his path. Its promises bring light and comfort to his soul, while he consults those heavenly pages, and rests upon their truth. It is his guide, and compass, and chart—telling of his Savior’s love, and blood, and glory, unfolding to his vision the fields of glory beyond the tomb, the rest that remains for the people of God in heaven. Such being the blessedness and glory which the Scriptures reveal as the inheritance of the saints, how can the Christian but love his Bible, exclaiming with David—“ How love I thy law ! it is my meditation all the day.” Read the 119th Psalm, and you will see that this pious Psalmist made it the end of his piety to know, love, and keep the commands of God. Those Christians who have been eminently pious, have in all ages loved the Bible, and have made it the great book

of their study, their constant companion, and their man of counsel. Thousands have said with David, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ;" and such as have drank often and deeply at this fountain, to whose enraptured soul God's spirit has revealed the full glory of these Oracles of Truth, will not easily be induced to neglect the Bible for light and unsubstantial reading. Those who have been born of God will love his word ; it will be "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." Reader, bind the sacred volume to thy heart.

5. Love of the ordinances of the gospel, is an evidence of regeneration. Love of the gospel and the ordinances of the church, was a striking characteristic among the primitive disciples. On the day of Pentecost, no sooner had the three thousand believed on Jesus Christ, than "they were baptized ;" and walked joyfully forward in gospel order—"they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"—"with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." And so is this evidence of regeneration always to be looked for in every age of the church. If any indulge hope in the pardoning mercy of God, and have no spiritual relish for the ordinances of the gospel and of religious worship, as baptism, the Lord's Supper, public and social worship, study of the Scriptures, self-examination, and prayer—he betrays a serious lack of experimental religion ; and though he may be

————— "Esteemed a real saint,  
Will make his own destruction sure ?"

6. The regenerated will love the people of God. This is expressly given as scriptural evidence of the new birth : "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren : he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 1 John 3:14. Perhaps no other criterion is so frequently referred to

for strengthening one's hope, and affording peace of mind, as this text ; and yet none is more frequently perverted. 'Brotherly love' would lead us to unite with God's people, be willing to suffer with them, and bear one another's burdens. But not a few have lived in neglect of baptism for years—not a few belonging to the church have for years absented themselves from the communion table, though favored with repeated opportunities—neglected family prayer—do but a precious little to support the gospel at home, or for benevolence abroad ; who yet refer to this text as the prominent and sure ground of their Christian hope. Let all such remember how carefully God has guarded this text from being justly applied to those to whom it does not belong. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, *and keep his commandments.*" 1 John 5:2. The point then of loving God, or whether we have passed from death unto life, hinges on this other point, are we keeping God's commands as the active followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ? The true love of God shed abroad in the heart, begets love for the saint ; and this love, if genuine and true, leads its possessor to love his brother, of any church, kindred, tongue, or people—rich or poor, learned or unlearned, bond or free, black or white. A Christian becomes such—not by birth or education, national distinction or complexion—but by being sanctified by the blood of Christ ; and by the mutual love existing among them the world is to know that they are the disciples of Jesus. John 18:35. Such love will always show itself in the discharge of fraternal duty in the church, and active benevolence for the spread of the gospel and the salvation of souls.

7. Supreme love of God. This disposition lies at the foundation of all true holiness and Bible Christianity. To "love God with all the heart," is the very essence of that religion which serves God, because it is right to serve him. It chooses the service of God as the highest good attainable here below ; and enables those who

thus love to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee! and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

"To love God," says one writer, "is the fruit of the Holy Spirit; that is, it is truly exercised only in the souls which he has regenerated; and, as that which excites its exercise is chiefly, and in the first place, a sense of the benefits bestowed by the grace of God in our redemption, and an humble persuasion of our interest in those benefits, it necessarily pre-supposes our reconciliation to God through faith in the atonement of Christ, and that attestation of it to the heart by the spirit of adoption. We here see, then, another proof of the connection of Christian morals with Christian doctrine, and how imperfect and deceptive every system must be which separates them." There should be in every heart that love to God which will enable us to say, "Thou art the one altogether lovely." Men should love God for the holiness and excellency of his nature; for his purity, his mercy, his justice and truth.

8. The witness of the spirit, is another evidence that Christians are the children of God; Rom. 8:16. No person should settle down upon a religious hope, unless he have the Holy Spirit witnessing with his spirit, that he has been born of God. This is a true ground of hope. Reader, see to it that your hope has the seal of the spirit. This evidence is attainable, and your privilege. "Be ye filled with the spirit." "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Destitute of this Divine influence upon the heart, whatever other qualifications we may possess, we cannot be accepted of God; for, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But, if led by the spirit of God, we are his sons. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." Who would presume to live without this

Divine evidence of sins forgiven, when he may enjoy it as an anchor to his soul, both sure and steadfast?

9. All who are truly regenerated have entered into solemn covenant with God. No soul fully submits to Christ, and obtains evidence of acceptance with God, without fully covenanting to be the Lord's and to love and serve him. It was so with God's ancient people; it is so under the gospel. When Jacob had the vision at Bethlehem, he covenanted with God in these words: "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, &c., then shall the Lord be my God; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will give the tenth unto thee." The captives that should return from captivity should say, "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." In Nehemiah's time, God's people joined themselves to him, saying, "We make a sure covenant and write it." In this manner every truly converted soul will enter into covenant with the Savior, to live, not to himself, but to him that died for him and rose again; taking God for his portion, he will dedicate himself to him, not for a few months, but in solemn covenant to spend the remnant of his days to his glory. Whoever has not made such a covenant, has reason to doubt if he has ever truly yielded his heart to God. "Thy vows are upon me, O God!"—should be the feeling of every Christian, while he remembers the covenant his soul made in the days of his espousal.

10. Consecration to the cause of God. To profess to be a follower of Christ, and not be devoted in his service, is palpably absurd. A profession—a hope in Christ, is nothing worth, if the life does not correspond to the holy law. The foolish virgins had profession, a hope; but no oil in their vessels. They were ill prepared to meet the bridegroom! Is it not to be feared that not a few who have made a good profession, are like trees which blossom well, but bring forth no fruit? Mr. Law has truly said—"He therefore is the devoted man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way

and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God ; who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety ; by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affection, we do not live the life of Christians." This same writer, alluding to those professors whose lives do not conform to their holy profession, remarks pointedly—" They have the same taste for the world, the same worldly cares and fears and joys, the same turn of mind, the same vanity of dress, the same levity and trifling of mind, visitings and conversation, as the rest of the world that make no pretension to devotion." Let professed Christians examine themselves by this rule.

To be dedicated to God, is the best evidence that the other graces are actually enjoyed in the heart. This is showing our faith by our works. It is indeed just what religion is, *a system of practical godliness* ; living for God, and not for self. Let not the reader think that *either one* of the preceding evidences of regeneration, is a sufficient evidence of a change of heart. No ; it is the happy *union* of the *whole*, which gives proof of a thorough work of grace. A drawing of the heart toward all that is lovely, and an abhorrence for all that is evil. May none who profess to be children of God, cease to believe, wrestle, and pray, until they are entirely devoted to God, and possess clear scriptural evidences of their acceptance in the Beloved, and of their treasure in heaven.

## CHAPTER II.

## SUPERFICIAL RELIGION.

All who have made themselves familiar with the Bible must have been forcibly struck with its explicit instructions that men should make thorough work on the subject of religion. Repentance must be unto life ; the whole heart must be yielded up to God ; men must dig deep and lay the foundation on the rock ; must count the cost before they begin to build ; and having put their hand to the plough, there must be henceforth no indecision, no looking back. Such being the Bible instructions for a thorough work in religion, it will be readily admitted that there is danger lest the professed followers of Christ rest satisfied with a ‘superficial’ work of grace on the heart, the ‘fallow ground’ not having been thoroughly broken up. Superficialness in religion is illustrated in the Savior’s parable of the sower. See Matt. 13:20,21. On stony places, where there is not much deepness of earth, the seed springs up, but soon withers away, and yields no fruit. This illustrates the nature of ‘superficial religion.’ We have reason to believe that there are such hearers, such professors now, as well as in the Savior’s time. They rejoice in hope for a season, but soon their religion terminates, as is apparent from their suspension of religious duties, and an open reproach is often brought upon the cause of God. To this subject our second chapter invites the prayerful attention of the reader.

I. The nature of superficial religion. What are its characteristics ?

1. It is *unstable*. Men only superficial in religion, may at times appear to be devoted and truly pious ; but it is only at times—occasional flights. Instead of maintaining a strait-forward, every day course of consistent piety, they act out what they happen to ‘feel.’ Following their feelings and irregular fancies, they are the

dupes of an ever-changing caprice, and you find them very zealous for some particular practice to-day, but to-morrow this is renounced ; a new idea has struck them, and they are all carried away with their new views. A new preacher, or a new doctrine, is all the rage with such unstable minds. If a little revived, they will contend earnestly for family prayer ; and will pray so long that all knees are weary. Anon, their convictions undergo another change—they now see no positive command enjoining family prayer ; think it well for such to pray as ‘feel’ it duty ; but with them so much precision about family or secret prayer every morning and evening, is all a cold formality. And so in the social meetings ;—at one time all alive themselves, and wondering why brethren and sisters are so dull ; and then for weeks they are as still in these exercises as a mute, or can feel best to stay away from the praying-circle altogether. There is usually among such superficial professors, an itching ear for something new ; some new dogma in religion is greedily embraced, or some new preacher is preaching most wonderful sermons ; and after these they will run, joying that they can once more hear the gospel preached in its power. Truly has James said, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Let such remember the dying testimony of Israel to one of his sons : “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

2. Superficial religion is boisterous. How does it excite the passions !—and with what zeal do all under its influence engage in their endeavors to carry forward the views to themselves all-important. When they happen to have a particular awakening, they can exhort ministers and deacons to awake, as if themselves were all the living Christians in the whole church ; though they have been asleep for months, and been borne as dead weights by the truly pious whom they are now exerting to duty. Their exhortations being loud and accompanied by apparent zeal, men unacquainted with them might suppose them filled with the fullness

of God's love. But, alas ! they only blaze for a short period ; their light is that of the sky-rocket, blazing for a moment, and all is dark again. For a short season they attend meetings, day or night, rain or shine; but, alas ! their "goodness is as a morning cloud." It soon dies away into the silence of death. And here they remain for months or years, until another religious spasm comes over them, when they arise and blaze again for a season, as boisterously as ever, only again to grow cold and die away, when the revival has subsided, and persecution ariseth.

3. The superficial are self-confident. None knocked louder or longer, or were more confident of admission, than the foolish virgins. But their religion had all died away as they slept. They were as confident of a preparation to go out and meet the bridegroom, as the wise virgins : perhaps more so. But there was no self-examination ; no seeing to the oil in their vessels ; self-confidence was their ruin. With the same self-deception and fool-hardy confidence will not some even go up to the judgment, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ?" To such the Judge shall say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity !" How important a duty is faithful self-examination ! How important that the heart be kept with all diligence, remembering that out of it are the issues of life !

There is a confidence that is commendable in all—confidence in God. But superficial religion does not lead to this. He who has never had the fallow ground of his heart thoroughly broken up, or if this has been done, has permitted it to lie without constant cultivation, does not maintain a consistent and persevering life of godliness from principle, and will be led to lay great stress upon certain emotions. Should doubts arise in his mind, he settles the important question by an appeal to feelings, saying, "I know I have been happy." Let such remember that the stony-ground

hearers received the gospel "with joy." Joy and good feelings should never be made the test of genuine piety. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Self-confidence is not only concerned in judging of Christian character, but too often has something to do in originating resolutions. The self-confident may say—I will pray constantly in my family—will help support the ministry—will be more punctual in meetings—will live better in future—not again give way to passion—will not go into such vain company—nor let the enemy get advantage over me again. Such may sometimes be the language of a self-confident spirit, instead of humble trust in God. Think of Peter's self-trust, and of his fall. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Be not high minded, but fear."

4. As superficial religion has its origin, so it has its end, much in *self*. No trait of character stands forth with greater prominence in fallen man, than selfishness. None has struck its roots deeper in the depraved human heart. It has become so deeply entrenched, that nothing short of the grace of God can subdue the heart, and instead of self-love, implant true love for God and benevolence for man. A deep, thorough work of grace, not a superficial work, is necessary, that these roots of an evil tree spring not forth again. Consequently the religion of Christ has made *self-denial* the first step, and every step, in the way to heaven; and without it no man can be a disciple of Jesus. Luke 14:33. But self-love, if indeed not sheer selfishness, is a prominent mark of the superficial. Ask them, Do you pray regularly in your family? and you are answered in the negative; and the reason assigned is, that they did not enjoy their minds any better for attending to this duty. And so in reference to their duties in the prayer meeting. Here the *motive* is seen to be enjoyment rather than duty. It ends in *self*.

Alas! beloved reader, it ought not so to be in the church of Christ. We are not our own, but bought

with a price ! It is our duty to glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are God's. The soul-searching and soul-stirring question should be—Am I glorifying God? am I living for Christ, who died for me, and rose again ? Let us all search our hearts as with the candle of the Lord.

## II. Some of the defects of superficial religion.

1. At the first glance it is seen that it lacks system. In all this class of professors, they have no *plan*. All their devotions are attended to, or neglected, according to the impulse of the moment. There is little or no constancy in family religious duties, in secret devotions, study of God's word, going to the house of worship, or contributing to benevolent objects. This defect runs throughout the whole conduct of some professors. Sincere piety is a regulator of man's affairs and conduct. Christianity is a system in itself ; and where pure religion flourishes, the life will be regulated by it. This and that thing will be attended to from sense of its being duty. If there should always be system and order in men's temporal affairs, much more should there be in their religious deportment. There should be a time for every duty, and every duty should be done in its proper time. Where pure religion exists, there will be system.

2. It is wanting in power and life. In genuine piety there is power and soul. The grace of God, the love of God, the spirit of God, are powerful. They crucify us to the world, and make us alive to God. The weapons of vital godliness are mighty to destroy the strong holds of sin ; and God's love nerves up the whole soul of man, for a mighty work. But that religion which is superficial, lacks power to keep the nominal professor in the hour of temptation ; it lacks power to stretch forth his hand for the doing of good to others, or to perform those duties in the church which his profession has devolved upon him. Hence many who, when they professed a change, seemed to be soundly converted, have disappointed our expectations,

and in time of temptation have fallen away ; or when they have gone from the limits of their church, neglecting to make religion an every-day business, and the business of every place, have evinced that the seed of the kingdom had fallen upon ground that had little depth or fertility of soil. How many to-day are members of the church whose religion lacks the power and vitality to conform their own hearts to gospel spirituality, or to nerve them for work in Christ's blessed vineyard.

3. Again—it is defective in respect to all actual tendency to convince the world of the blessed reality and the worth of true religion. "Ye are the light of the world—the salt of the earth," said the Savior of true, genuine, whole-souled Christians. But what have they to do in this matter of *convincing* the world, whose religion evaporates "as the early dew"? One day they talk and pray, and make solemn vows of consecration ; the next, they join with the ungodly in sin—their feelings and convenience governing all their religious movements. Do such convince the world of their sin—of Christianity's holiness? Nay ; they sadly counteract the saving influences of a holy gospel ; they counteract the holy efforts of God's devoted people. At least this is the tendency of the influence of all such as have "a name to live and are dead"! Can the world be converted by such an influence ? NEVER.

III. Notice some things which have contributed toward so much superficialness in the churches.

1. There has been too often a want of care in *receiving* members into the church, especially in times of revival. At such times generally much excitement prevails. Many may be moved by excitement, and by nothing else. The judgment is not suitably informed, the understanding not fully enlightened, the heart not thoroughly changed ; but seeing many of their associates turning to the Lord, from sympathy of feeling and from the general excitement, they move forward with others. Thus it is to be feared that many become religious. Now, to turn from this as an uncharitable

picture, is to suppose that in our times there are no stony-ground hearers. But be assured that some such there are ; and without special care on the part of the pastor and church, some such will be admitted to membership, though as destitute of religion as Simon the sorcerer.

2. An undue anxiety to increase the *numbers* in the church, we fear, has often opened a door for unconverted persons to enter the church. Numbers—a large church—sometimes sounds noble ; and this at times may have had no small influence. With some, numbers possess a sort of magic power, as if this alone were all that is necessary to convert the world. But not unfrequently it is a cause of death, rather than life, to Zion. A few devoted Christians—Christians at heart and in life, united together as one soul—will do far more for God and for the salvation of men, than a much larger number, many of whom are superficial and formal professors. What an amount of trials and labor would be avoided in the churches by special care in receiving members.

3. Again—there are so many urgent calls upon the church for pecuniary aid, that there is danger of laying too great stress upon *wealth*. Hence too great anxiety to have men unite with the church who are rich. In this way a superficial kind of religion may have been admitted into churches. Let it always be a rule no sooner to receive a rich than a poor member into your church, other things being equal ; or no sooner to labor with a poor than a rich brother, other things being equal. The wealthy, if devoted to God, may be more useful from their pecuniary ability, than those who are walking in poverty's vale. But facts too often prove that rich church members are far from being so devoted, spiritual, or benevolent, as some of those who are poor in riches, but rich in faith. True and fervent piety, Christian character, is the proper pre-requisite to membership in the church of Christ.

IV. What is the remedy, the proper antidote, against superficialness of religion in the churches?

We answer—*Raise the standard of piety; or rather, let the churches, pastor and people, come up to Bible Christianity.* Every person who takes upon himself the sacred profession of the Christian religion, should understand—if he has not before understood, at his baptism he should be instructed to understand—that he is not his own, but is bought with a price, and God requires that he should live henceforth for His glory, in full consecration to his service of both his body and soul. 1 Cor. 7:19, 20. That Christ has solemnly affirmed, “ Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Self must be renounced, love of the world forsaken, the glory of God and best interests of his cause, at all times consulted. There must be constant labor that the affections be right, and ‘the heart kept with all diligence.’ Here is the remedy for superficial religion and dead formality.

We answer—*Entire consecration to God, is the antidote.* “ My son, give me thy heart.” “ Seek first the kingdom of God.” “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” Let the spirit of these texts be carried out fully, and entire consecration of all we have and are to God would be the result. Let this subject be regarded with all the weighty considerations which the Bible suggests, and few hypocrites, or of those only superficially religious, would be received into the churches. The church would unfurl the banner of the Cross in holiness, and multitudes would flock into it, out of every kindred, and language, and nation; and the glory of God would indeed rise upon Zion. This would be BIBLE RELIGION.

## CHAPTER III.

## OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

SECTION I. *In what this work consists, and some evidences of progression in grace.*

The work of Divine grace on the heart, is always represented in the Scriptures as a *progressive work*; and the Christian, as either advancing or receding in the path of holiness. A person is advancing toward heaven and final happiness, only in proportion as he advances in holiness. True religion is a life of activity, self-denial, and daily struggle. The Bible sets forth the Christian life, under the figures of running, striving, laboring, fighting, wrestling, contending for the faith, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. It is a course of self-denial. "So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:33—Of watchfulness and prayer; see Matt. 26:41—Of consecration to God: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's;" 1 Cor. 6:20—Of GROWTH IN GRACE: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;" 2 Pet. 3:18. The primary meaning of the term *grace*, is "free favor; unmerited kindness." 'Grace' therefore may be theologically defined thus: "The favor of God, manifested in the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings to the guilty and the unworthy, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. Christians growing in grace will have a constantly increasing sense of dependence upon God. The more sensible men are of their need of help, the more ardently will they seek for it; the more they realize their own weakness, the less liable are they to fall. Says Paul, in sentiment, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' Grace shows man *himself* in a true light;

and O, how weak is man ! Albeit all Peter's self-confidence, the voice of a maiden filled him with fear ; and he denied his Master on oath. But when nerved by grace and the influence of the spirit, the whole Jewish Sanhedrim could not cause him to fear, or divert him from his work. So will Divine grace enable every Christian, who is progressing in the knowledge of God, to perform all duties devolving upon him. Many do little else but complain of a want of spirituality, want of confidence, stupidity, a cold heart, unworthiness, and the like. To our minds such a state of things is conclusive evidence that the complainers are not growing in grace. All should truly and habitually feel their dependence on God ; but so far from impoverishing, this will truly enrich them, as it will keep them near the throne ; and here they will gather up strength in God to arise by grace and overcome the world.

2. Growth in grace will give juster views of the vanity of the world, and of the exceeding sinfulness of all sin. Christians have so much to do with the world, it will be felt by every one that the world is strangely calculated to influence the mind. But the glory of religion is to exalt the mind above it, and to lead us to use this world as not abusing it. Primitive Christians " took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." They looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ; and confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Progression in grace will enable Christ's disciples to rise above the world ; though in it, not to be of it, realizing the emptiness of all created good, and remembering that " the fashion of the world passeth away." Riches, preferments, or worldly honors, should be of no consequence to Christians, only in so far as they shall prepare them for more usefulness in the cause of God. As you draw nearer to God and heaven, as you progress in grace, the world will recede, and in itself look more and more empty and worthless. And as

saints advance in the divine life, all sin will look the more exceeding sinful, and holiness constantly more desirable. Grace will be a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

3. As men grow in grace, they will rise superior to the corruptions of human nature, and power of temptations. But O, how many appear to think that their "inbred corruptions" are so many clogs, that must necessarily embarrass them all through life. How many talk of their "besetting sins" as if there were no remedy. But is it so? No, praise God; "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." Instead of complaining so long of a 'proud heart,' and your 'many infirmities,' humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, mortify the deeds of the body through the spirit, keep the body in subjection under you, and grace shall make you to conquer and triumph. Temptations you will have all your way to heaven, but you can determine with Paul, not to be brought under their power. Not the complaining of evil propensities or sore temptations, but the gaining of victory over them, is a true sign of growth in grace. Here is the warfare, the striving, the wrestling, of vital, living piety. Grace shall triumph; and there is no necessity that we run uncertainly or fight as one that beateth the air. God is to be sought unto, to do this thing for us; and He will give to faith and prayer glorious victory.

4. As Christians progress in holiness, they will possess clearer views of Christ's dying love, and be more impressed with the worth of souls. If the spouse could say, "Thou art the one altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand," shall not our souls be enraptured with the liveliest kindlings of sacred love, as we gaze upon the Son of God in his sufferings? Here at the cross let us sit us down; gaze on the scene of blood, till our love of our Redeemer kindle up into an undying flame!—and till we learn the worth of souls! And what living, growing Christian, who has learned, near the Savior's cross, the worth of souls, but will

feel a concern for souls, which will act itself out in fervent prayers and holy efforts for their salvation ? Be assured, if thy views of Christ's dying love are fainter, or thy desire for the salvation of the souls of men less ardent, thou art declining in spiritual life, instead of progressing in holiness and growing in grace.

5. The Christian virtues will shine out with increased lustre in the lives of all such as are making advancements in the spiritual life. They will exhibit an evenness of disposition, sweetness of temper, tenderness of heart, and kindness of soul, which shall convince men of progress. Faith will be stronger ; love more active ; humility more marked ; consecration to God more perfectly attained ; benevolence enlarged ; and prayer more fervent. As the main-spring in a watch—so increased love and confidence in God, shall give vigor and energy to all the virtues and all the duties of our holy religion, adding whatsoever thing is lovely and of good report, to the soul and the life of him who is progressing in sanctification and true holiness. We appreciate the ‘convert spirit’—the “first love” of the soul’s espousals ; but we are fully persuaded that he is to go on to obtain more light and more love, since “the path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.” The whole soul is to be cultivated, and we are to serve God with all our ransomed powers.

6. An increasing delight in the worship of God will be felt in hearts making progress in grace. God’s love in the soul prompts to holy action, and especially kindles up an intense desire to love and worship God. Alone, or with others, the service of God is sweet ; and the more we know of God, the more our souls will adore him. With David, it is the “one thing” they most desire of the Lord, that they may dwell in his house all the days of their life. Warm-hearted, progressive Christians make the poet’s language theirs :

“ Among the saints who fill thy house,  
My offering shall be made ;

There shall my zeal perform the vows  
My soul in anguish made."

God's service is the love and delight of the spiritual and devotedly pious—in public or in the family, in the closet or at the praying circle. If the soul is in prosperity, if the mind is advancing in holiness, our relish for God's worship will by no means diminish. If any can neglect religious services, public or secret,—aye, if they feel no strong out-gushing of soul for them, and neglect them, or perform them with reluctance, let such awake to the fearful and sad truth, that so far are they from growing in grace, they have fallen from their first love, if indeed they had ever been partakers of the love of Christ.

7. As we advance in grace, heaven will look more desirable. As the heart is more holy, you will more ardently love and long for the *purity* of heaven, the immediate dwelling place of GOD. How many, filled already with the fullness of ineffable love, have exclaimed with pious Job, "I would not live alway!" Or have been in a strait with Paul, "Having a desire to depart, and be with Christ!" How often has earth lost its attractions, as holy souls have sighed for heaven, and longed to be there! As the tempest-tossed mariner has wished for his haven, and as the wearied trayeller has sighed for his home—so have holy and spiritual saints looked upward to God and Heaven.

Kind reader, are the above-named characteristics of growth in grace, found in you? Pause a moment, and ask yourself—Am I truly progressing in Divine life? or, am I receding from Christ into the world? I entreat you, as you prize your own happiness, the honor of religion, the glory of God, examine your own heart, and seek constantly to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

SECTION II. *Some reasons why so many professed Christians make so little proficiency in spirituality and holiness.*

We have reason to believe that many make a profession of religion, without clearly comprehending what constitutes one a Christian. Some seem to suppose religion to be little else than to somehow become happy, talk on religion, or pray, as they may 'feel to,' be baptized, and unite with a church. With such erroneous views, such confidence that piety mainly consists in good feelings, we should not look for much advancement in spiritual life. True religion expands the soul, and leads from *self* to God. Converts should understand that pure religion is an every-day business; a constant exercise of faith, hope and charity; a steadfast perseverance in duties and every good work. But are there not those who seem to be perfectly contented with a nominal standing in the church—who having obtained a hope, acquired the fellowship of Christians by the enrollment of their names on the church records, seem to seek for no higher attainments; but rest as if all was certain, and their salvation sure? How lightly must they regard God's positive command—"And besides all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity!" Instead of adding "knowledge to virtue," many, as if they 'counted ignorance bliss,' remain ignorant of Zion's operations, wants, or prosperity; of the condition of their own denomination; of the moral state of the world. If men do not understand that true Christianity is a religion of duty as well as enjoyment, they have been converted to little purpose. Religion is an active principle; and they must keep the commands of God who would have a right to the tree of life. Heaven will be opened to the "good and faithful" servant.

The true gospel standard for religious attainments, is not kept in mind as it should be. Instead of setting the mark of eminent piety before us as Paul did, and pressing on toward that, we are prone to lower down

the gospel requirements, comparing ourselves with others about us, and satisfying conscience with the cold calculation that we are doing as well, or better, than others. This induces a cold and lifeless formality, and the soul loses the life and power of godliness. How unlike is all this, to the instructions of the Scriptures : “ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” If we would meekly receive this instruction, and keep the “ mark for the prize” before our minds, seeking constantly for higher attainments, we should grow in grace.

But again—‘ wrong instructions,’ given to young converts by older Christians, is not unfrequently a hindrance to progression in holiness. The rejoicings of their espousals to Christ, it is said, is their “ bounty money,” which will soon be expended, and then they are to expect fiery trials and much darkness all through life, with only occasional refreshings of grace and glimmerings of light and love. O, how unlike are such instructions to the infallible teachings of the Bible !—“ The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Prov. 4:18. “ He that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” John 8:12.

I once heard an old pilgrim—peace to her ashes ! her happy spirit, I humbly trust, is now in glory—address these words to a young convert, who by her disobedience was passing beneath an awful cloud of darkness : “ You need not always expect to enjoy your mind. And now *mark my word*, if you live long, you will see the time when you will look back to this period, and would give any thing in the world if you could enjoy as much religion as you now do.” I ask, would not a fair inference of the convert from such instruction be—“ If that is the case, I may think myself well off now” —dry her tears, and content herself in her unbelief and

disobedience? Had this young Christian been encouraged to have faith in Christ, and attend to her duty; had she been instructed that there were higher attainments of grace for her to seek in faith and prayer; it had been far better adapted to lead her to follow the Savior fully in heart-felt obedience to all God's commands. The same may be applied to the thousand-and-one instances where converts have received wrong instruction on the progressive nature of piety. If young disciples say, "It is as natural for me to be rude as it is to breathe"—let not "nursing fathers and mothers in Israel" say *aye* to it, and so justify them in ungodly levity. As well may any others yield to their 'easily besetting sins,' and plead *it is natural*. Such things can never harmonize with Bible instructions: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection."

Again. Many overlook or undervalue the ordinary means of grace. On the stretch for something great, their minds fixed on some extraordinary means, they will lay an undue stress, or attach an overweening value, to protracted, quarterly, or camp-meeting; while the common church prayer meeting, the family altar, and closet devotions, are not duly appreciated. This indulgence for something great and out of the common course, has a bewitching influence for evil over the heart; and diminishing the relish for the ordinary means, is prejudicial to growth in grace. What inconsistency to go miles to attend a quarterly meeting, or to hear a new preacher, in the hope to be specially benefitted, when the family altar, the stated prayer meeting, or even the closet, has been scarcely visited for months! Among what we would denominate the 'ordinary means of grace' are to be included, the regular and prayerful reading of the Scriptures as a religious exercise; attendance on the ordinances of the gospel; and daily self-examination. If professors turn their back on the ordinances which Christ has enjoined on believers, are contented to be 'novices' in the word of God, and neglect diligent and frequent self-examina-

tion, these are so many reasons why they do not grow in grace.

Want of decision of Christian character, is a fruitful source of hinderance to progressing in holiness. "Unstable as water, thou shalt never excel." With those in whose character indecision is strongly marked, a very little excuse suffices for neglect of religious duties. If their hour for secret devotion or for family prayer comes, a little company, or a visit from some friend, will answer for an apology to omit the duty. Daniel had a stronger reason to omit his supplications for thirty days, than such have, and yet "he prayed three times a day as he did aforetime." In this world of sin, *he* will not grow in grace who is *undecided*. The undecided will be carried about by "every wind of doctrine" which errorists may choose to broach; and you may expect to find them as ready as the impenitent to rush to hear a Universalist or a Mormon preach; though they *should* know beforehand, that without genuine piety men cannot be saved, and that water baptism is not regeneration. Or what consistency is it, for professed Christians to be found in the gatherings of disorganizers and come-outers, listening to the abuses of those that would tear down churches, and demolish every form of godliness? "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge." Prov. 19:12. False teachers will arise who shall deceive if possible the very elect; but "go not after them."

Perhaps no one device of satan has taken so generally, especially among young disciples, as forming intimate connections with the unconverted. It is a humiliating thought that multitudes of young professors should choose their intimate associates among those who love not the Savior. With them, they go to, and from the house of God, visit and receive visits, &c. Such a course is detrimental to piety, to say the least; and, I doubt not, many can refer the beginnings of backsliding from God, to such a practice. Circumstances

will often require that the pious should be in the company of the impenitent, but when this is the case, Christians should always deport themselves as will become their high and holy profession, exhibiting religion in all its loveliness, but never traduce its holy principles. It is said of Lady Elizabeth Langham, who had the influence of the nobility of England to contend with—that “she was modest and grave in her whole demeanor, not from the defect of sprightliness, or of good humor, but from a just sense of what was demanded by the dignity of her sex and virtue. She displayed, at the same time, affability and condescension in kindly receiving the visits, even of the meanest of her neighbors, and frequently conversing with them. As any of them savored more of godliness, she increased her familiarity, studiously declining to admit any to her *friendship*, till by accurate observation she had found them to answer that character of worth by which it was her plan to choose her friends; not that of greatness, but goodness.”

Fatal to a life of piety in innumerable instances is the choice of irreligious associates, when the law of God is disregarded on the subject of *marriage*. Read carefully Josh. 23:11, 12, 13. Under the gospel, the same rule is to be observed. “She is at liberty to marry to whom she will, ONLY IN THE LORD.” 1 Cor. 7:39. The evils arising from the violation of God’s law on this subject, are often of the most serious nature. On this subject, I would recommend a little book written by J. G. Pike, and republished by our Printing Establishment, entitled, “The duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord; enforced by an appeal to the Scriptures and to fact.” The author says: “The evils are numerous. In many cases the total loss of piety is the deplorable effect. Many who once appeared promising fair for heaven, when united to the followers of the world, have forsaken the path of peace. Some find in their unbelieving partners, the decided enemies of religion; others gradually imbibe the spirit of those with whom they are united. These tempt them to

unite in pleasures that they once abhorred ; to neglect duties that they once loved ; to profane the Sabbath ; to neglect their religious privileges ; to mingle with associates averse to piety, and to join with them in scenes of dissipation. Thus Christian friends are forsaken, and perhaps regarded as enemies. Gradually, but surely, the blighting, blasting influence of the forbidden union, is felt upon the soul. Religion languishes—declines—and dics ! The day of their marriage is the day that sets the seal to their eternal ruin." We ask, How can such grow in grace ? If not impossible, it is, as Dr. Payson used to say, like a bird attempting to rise into the heavens with one wing broken ! Let the disciples of Christ be careful how they choose for their intimate friends, for life or at all but to do them good, the ungodly who love not their Savior.

These are some of the reasons why there are so many members in the churches that make, some of them no, others but little, true advancement in religion. Other reasons doubtless exist, additional to those now specified. Now we are sure that whatever hinderances may lie in the way of a growth in grace, the Bible teaches us that we can overcome them, and how we may do it. There is much land yet to be possessed ; many attainments of grace to be sought after with success ; and may God help all to use the means, and obtain the blessing !

### SECTION III. *The means by which Christians are to grow in grace.*

Exercise is necessary to growth, the development of strength, and the security of health. This is as truly a law of the soul as of the body. It follows that, if you would attain to strength of piety and growth in grace, there must be a constant exercise of the Christian graces, a faithful performance of religious duties, and a vigilant improvement of sacred privileges. Religion should engage the full soul ; the heart be wholly God's. Children of God ! survey your duties ; and gird around

you the whole panoply of grace. God will help them who help themselves.

1. A familiar acquaintance with the Holy Bible is of special importance. We mean that study of the Scriptures which shall make the thoughts of God your own ; and shall breathe the spirit running through the sacred oracles into your own spirit. If Christians would acquire such a knowledge of the Book of God, as it is their duty and privilege, they must read and study it daily, and with fervent prayer. So will the mind be enlightened and the heart warmed ; so will they claim its promises and write its precepts on the living tablets of the heart. During his labors in a certain town, the author had often heard the people speak in high terms of the piety of an old pilgrim who had died a few years previous. All extolled his extraordinary devotedness to God. While visiting in one of the families, an old family Bible particularly excited my attention, fastened together by strings instead of clasps. I had the curiosity to inquire into the history of the ancient looking book, and ascertained it had belonged to the gentleman's grandfather, the old pilgrim whose piety the people so reverenced. The old saint had read it for many years by course, and had been daily in the habit of laying it away with his glasses put to keep his place of reading, that the Bible would no longer stay shut of itself. He so eagerly loved his family Bible that in one instance he read it through in eight days. Did not this, think you, account for his high-toned, all-pervading piety ? It is said of the Countess of Suffolk, England, that she used to read the Bible through twice a year, for the last seven years of her life. Many of the most eminently pious and learned ministers in the church, who have studied the Bible for years, have declared, that as often as they read it now, they constantly discover new beauties and new truths. It is a fountain from which you may draw daily for many long years, and is yet exhaustless. More still : it is the guide God has given you, to conduct you to holiness

and heaven. The more we peruse the precious volume, the more shall we bind it to our heart, repeating after the poet—

“ How precious is the book divine,  
By inspiration given !  
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,  
To guide our souls to heaven.”

2. Other books and publications, calculated to inform the mind and improve the heart, may render important aid to spiritual improvement. The memoirs of the ‘pious dead,’ for instance. Who that feels the power of grace on his soul, can read the biography of some of the eminently holy and useful men of God, now resting from their labors, and not be stimulated by their example, to increased faithfulness in the same cause? How have the zeal and holy ardor of Henry Martyn or David Brainard, awakened the missionary zeal in thousands who have read their memoirs? Many others might be specified of the same kind. Other works, also, containing sound doctrine, purely Evangelical, and of a highly devotional character. These are aids to spiritual devotion. Who can tell how many Christians have been helped onward in the Divine life, by reading Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress—Doddridge’s Rise and Progress—Flavel’s Fountain of Life—Baxter’s Saint’s Everlasting Rest? And so of many other writings. Add to your Bible, if you possess the means, a little library of useful religious reading. They will be helps to you in seeking to grow in grace. A religious newspaper or two, for yourself and your family, will be of great use. Christians should seek to become intelligently holy, and acquaint themselves with the state of Zion in all parts of the great vineyard.

3. No Christian ever made any considerable proficiency in the divine life without *much prayer*. Experimental religion cannot in fact begin in the soul without it. Prayer is emphatically the element, the native air, of all who are growing in grace. Christians cannot live without it, any more than a bird could live in an ex-

hausted receiver. As it would gasp and die, cut off from the element of animal life—so would he, take away prayer. Prayer, much prayer, stands out a prominent trait in the character of all holy men, in whatever age of Christianity. Portray to yourself Jacob, Elijah, David, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, in their constancy, fervency, and faith, as they wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant before the mercy seat. While they talk with God, the angel blesses, the rain descends, Israel prospers, the lions' mouths are chained, bands are broken, prisons opened. But primitive times gone, and the age of miracles past, prayer remains the same; bringing down the grace of God upon humble hearts, strengthening the faith of saints, awakening the slumbering sinner, giving victory to Zion, moving the arm that moves worlds. O, blessed, heaven-bought privilege! Who would not, then, at the mercy seat go and commune with God, and obtain grace to help in every time of need? Christian—dost thou falter mid manifold temptations! Away, then, to the throne of grace. Remember that eminent piety can only be obtained by much praying. Let every day find thee communing with thy Savior, God. At early morn, before thou goest into the world or the world gets into thee—at late eve, when another day's account goes up to the judgment—yea, many times a day—bow thee in prayer.

4. Religious meditation as an aid to grace on the heart, has sometimes been too much overlooked. "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide." David could say, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee, and meditate on thee in the night watches." The evening or early morning, is peculiarly fitted for meditation; though every Christian will find much time for this duty, even while his hands are employed in manual labor. In the field or the shop, while at work, there are often good opportunities for religious meditation. Then

you may think of what you have read in your spare hours, and make the best thoughts of others permanently your own, expanding and enlarging your knowledge and improving the mind. Make God's testimonies much the subject of your reflections. How many are the subjects for pious and useful meditation ! The volume of nature,—heaven adorned with her ten thousand stars ; earth, with her variegated scenery of wood and field, mountain and vale ; ocean in all its wildness of grandeur, of billows and storms ; the changes of seasons, rain and snow, thunders and lightnings—Life, with all its changes—Revelation in all its glories of redemption and grace. Reader, feast thy soul daily with all the sweet incomes and soul-cheering fruits of pious and holy meditation.

5. "Know thyself," (*Gnothi seauton*) was a Greek inscription upon a temple of the gods. A most important branch of knowledge is to know one's self. It is absolutely necessary to all desirous to grow in grace. This knowledge can only be obtained by the blessing of God on the duty of self-examination ; hence this duty is one of the choice means by which to progress in holiness. Make short and faithful settlements with thy conscience. Do you now possess the evidence of fellowship with Christ, and with Christ's disciples, that you once possessed ? Is prayer as sweet, and sweeter than ever ? Are you as willing to forsake the vanities of the world, and ungodly associates, as you once were ? Do you as heartily delight in God's worship ? Are you doing all in your power to promote religion, and save souls ? Do you love the Lord supremely ? Such questions should be put in faithful self-examination to every conscience as in the sight of God. They will excite us onward in the way to holiness.

6. Afflictions sanctified. Gratitude to God for all blessings should always be felt in every regenerated soul. And when afflictions come, they should be received, not with sorrowful repinings, but with pious resignation. 'Do afflictions grow out of the dust ?'

By no means. God appoints the rod ; and often, as the best possible good for the children of his love. Paul and Silas were happy and sang God's praises while in the stocks ; so may Christians be resigned and joyful in the midst of severe afflictions. Grace will prepare us to say, " Not my will, but thine, O God, be done." Whatever be the nature of thy affliction, commit all into the hands of thy best Friend. But let none rest, till the affliction be sanctified for *good* to them. It is not enough that the metal be melted in the crucible ; it must be molded also. Christians must not only pass through the furnace ; but they must come out of it refined, and more than ever bearing the image of their Master. Afflictions, then, to be sanctified, must lead us to God, bring along with them patience and humility, wean us from earth, raise our affections to things above.

7. Finally—Let none flatter themselves that they are growing in grace, unless they ardently *desire* it. If there be an ardent desire for the blessing, there will be a faithful use of the means to be employed. Crucifixion to the world, and a living to God, are to be our steady aim. Piety is always an active principle. To talk of unworthiness, unfitness, inability, will never advance any one in holiness. Unbelief is a damning sin ; Sloth and inactivity are criminal in Christ's disciples. " To obey is better than sacrifice." The way to your closet, must be path-beaten—family religion must be attended to, from principle—the prayer meeting regularly attended, from sense of duty. Unbelief and unfaithfulness will bow down the head, as a bulrush ; faithful perseverance from duty to duty in the pathway of holiness, secures the blessing—" Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." Be not obliged to confess ' I have lost a day !'—but labor constantly to be in the spirit to say : " My soul followeth hard after thee—As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall

I come and appear before God!" Such anxiety will take hold on God, and bring the blessing nigh. Yea, it secures the blessing, and makes it ours. "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: To whom be glory, both now and forever: Amen."

## CHAPTER IV.

## CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

The fact that Christians are surrounded on every hand, by foes to holiness and God, watching for their halting and ready to rejoice over their downfall, should apprise them of the necessity of a watchful spirit. An alluring world, a tempting devil, the inward workings of an unsanctified heart—seem to urge the duty of watchfulness. The much we have to do, the little time we have to do it in, and the difficulties in the way of its performance, together with God's explicit commands, should engrave on all hearts Christian watchfulness, as a most important and sacred duty. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." "Watch and pray." "Let us watch and be sober." "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." From these texts it is seen to be a subject explicitly urged on all Christ's disciples in the word of God.

SECTION I. *What Christians should watch against.*

1. They should carefully watch against *lightness*. If the mind were as deeply impressed with a sense of eternal things as it should be, there would be no necessity for the admonition to watch. Can souls indulge in a vain and trifling mind while the thoughts are occupied on the solemn realities of the eternal world? Impossible! Is lightness a right frame of spirit in which to approach the throne of grace? Verily not! Or having enjoyed a season of special prayer, holy and accepted communion at mercy's seat, do we immediately become lively and vain? No, never! As foolish talking and jesting and senseless mirth, never fit the soul for prayer, and prayer never induces lightness, it can never harmonize with that serious, yet cheerful, deportment ever becoming the Christian conduct and manner. Think, dear reader, how much you have al-

ready lost by lightness in its several kinds and degrees ? How has it destroyed your confidence—led you to neglect your duty in the church—caused you to omit prayer, and robbed your soul of peace ! Vain talking, laughing and jesting, will always be attended with spiritual death. They disqualify those indulging in them, to use personal efforts to win the impenitent to Christ, or to take an active part in social religious meetings. Let Christians, then, watch against lightness, as a snare which would rob their own souls of peace, the unconverted of a duty they solemnly owe to them, and the church of a service which they have covenanted to perform.

2. Against all *evil speaking*. “ The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.” Guard, with sleepless vigilance, this little member. An evil tongue is “ a fire, a world of iniquity; setting on fire the course of nature, it is set on fire of hell !—an unruly evil full of deadly poison.” James 3:5—8. Let a strict watch be set, as you love the peace of churches and neighborhoods, against all unguarded, untruthful, or slanderous words. “ Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.” Prov. 21:23. Think of Moses at the waters of strife. How few the words, yet how fatal ! “ Hear now, ye rebels ; must we fetch you water from this rock ? ” For this saying, (not sanctifying the Lord in the miracle,) he was to see the promised land, but not to enter it. But how have the hearts of others than yourself been wounded by an unguarded word ! The tongue of the tattling, slandering ‘ busy-body’ separateth very friends,’ in family or church. It is a character, that

“ To be hated, needs but to be seen.”—

And POLLOK has drawn his portraiture to the very life.

“ SLANDER, the foulest whelp of sin. The man  
In whom this spirit entered, was undone.  
His tongue was set on fire of hell ; his heart  
Was black as death ; his legs were faint with haste

To propagate the lie his soul had framed.  
 His pillow was the peace of families  
 Destroyed, the sight of innocence reproached,  
 Broken friendships, and the strife of brotherhoods !  
 From door to door you might have seen him speed,  
 Or placed amidst a group of gaping fools,  
 And whispering in their ears, with his foul lips.  
 Peace fled the neighborhoods in which he made  
 His haunts ; and, like a moral pestilence,  
 Before his breath, the healthy shoots and blossoms  
 Of social joy and happiness, decayed.  
 Fools only in his company were seen,  
 And those forsaken of God, and to themselves  
 Given up. The prudent shunned him and his house  
 As one who had a deadly moral plague !?

Watch against tale-bearing, backbiting, venomous insinuations, and evil speaking of every sort, and in its first beginnings. It is evil, and only evil continually. With David, resolve to take heed to your ways and your words, that you sin not with your tongue.

3. Christians are to watch against *formality* in religious duties. Is it not apparent that many who have a form of godliness, do not possess much of its power ? Do not many seem only to *repeat* their prayers, instead of enjoying the spirit of effectual fervent prayer, the power and unction of holy and direct communion with a prayer hearing God ? Alas ! what formality are some closets and some family shrines a witness to ! This is not to wrestle with God as Jacob wrestled, nor to prevail as Israel. If such go to the house of prayer, they go without praying breath, and do not even expect the blessings of strong faith and earnest supplications. Formality may be very tenacious of certain doctrines and modes, may be exact as the precisest in respect of some particular duties, while it is nearly destitute of the soul-cheering fruits of the Holy Spirit ; love, joy, peace. What others say of the heavenly sweets that ravish the whole soul, and the joy unspeakable they find in prayer, is well nigh unintelligible to the chilly hearted formalist. Those who are contented with the prosy formality that marks all their religious performances, are sometimes, un-

charitable towards their more devoted friends ; and judging others by their own standard, hardly think themselves less engaged, and will take it unkindly if exhorted to more spirituality. One is led to ask, why must the human soul be aroused in all absorbing energy in other matters, matters of infinitely less moment, and when it engages in religion, be as dull and monotonous as if nothing were at stake ? It ought not so to be. Religion has life in it, and interest, to awaken and absorb all our ransomed powers. Let zeal, and energy, and spiritual warmth, mark all our devotions, before men, or alone with God. None can be more circumspect as to the forms of religion, than were the pharisees in the time of Christ, yet none are more destitute of the power of truth on the heart. They were self-righteous, and it would seem that dull religious formalists may come to be righteous above others.—This is a leaven of hypocrisy against which Christ warns his disciples to guard. If a sermon is preached pointedly against backslidings, the self-righteous formalist will give the instruction himself needs, to this and that member of the church, reserving none for his own needy spirit. So year in and year out, he lives on still in the frigid zone of formalism, making no true progress in a holy life. Form is good, but if our forms are destitute of the Divine power, as a body without soul we are dead.

4. Christians should watch against *pride*. This subtle foe of man, and destroyer of human happiness, has many complicated windings ; but can never be anything better than a foe to God and religion. God hath declared that he hates pride ; Prov. 8:13—that he knoweth the proud afar off; Ps. 138:6—that he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble ; 2 Pet. 5:5. Pride is an inordinate self-esteem ; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, rank or elevation in office, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve, or contempt of others." It will at once be

seen that it can never be made subservient to the interests of true godliness. In no other way does this passion of the perverted heart manifest itself so extensively, as in love of dress and decoration of the body. Thousands of the poor are effectually shut out from the sanctuary, because they cannot appear at the house of God so nicely and richly dressed as their wealthier neighbors, through a false delicacy of feeling on this point ; and many parents will keep their children from the sanctuary and the Sabbath school, because, forsooth, they cannot appear so richly dressed as some of the other children. I appeal to the consciences of the pious, if there is not a foolish and wicked vanity for dress and "outward adorning," and following of the fashions of the world, extensively prevalent among the professed people of God ? Is there not a thoughtless disregard of God's commands ? "Whose adorning, let it *not* be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ; but let it be the hidden man of the heart." 1 Pet. 3:3. "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety ; *not* with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array ; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Tim. 2:9, 10. Such is the direction of the word of God to all the saints, instructing them in the matter of dress. But look out on the churches, and ask, Is there not a criminal disregard of positive Bible instruction; by a majority of members in evangelical churches ? No Christian who reads the command, "Thou shalt not kill," doubts but that God meant just what he said. But how many pay no more attention to the above texts on *dress*; than if there were no such commands in the Bible. "To see a person professing godliness, decorated with wreaths, chains, gold, and pearls, and costly apparel, vieing to out do the world, in fashions and appearance, while poverty, ignorance and suffering, are all around us, while thousands in our own land and

hundreds of thousands abroad, have never had one ray of gospel light—is notoriously contrary to the whole spirit of the Christian religion, and an open violation of one of the plainest commands of the New Testament. There is an excellency and worth in true religion, that may well dispense with all such foreign and unhallowed resources of false pleasure, and indulgences of forbidden pride. And, as Israel brought their ornaments of gold and silver to Aaron for the molten calf, would all professors of religion in the churches, offer upon the altar of Christian missions all superfluous ornaments of gold and costly apparel, dressing as becometh those professing godliness, what an offering would at once be presented to God, and what a momentum would be given to the blessed work of spreading the gospel among the nations!

Pride does not consist wholly in vanity for dress. It sometimes excites jealousy of others, and begets suspicion that ourselves are neglected, and others unworthily promoted. It not unfrequently leads some to covet the gifts of others ; and to neglect the faithful improvement of what God has committed to themselves, because he has given no more. The one talent is hid in the napkin because it is not five. This state of mind is exceedingly injurious to piety and usefulness, when it keeps Christians from the improvement of their gifts in the church and before the world. Let us, dear brethren, watch against pride in all its manifold forms as a foe to grace, and seek to be clothed with unpretending humility.

5. Christians should guard against fanaticism. By religious fanaticism is meant, “excessive enthusiasm; a kind of phrenzy, or over-heated imagination; wild and extravagant notions of being influenced by the Holy Spirit, irrespective of the teachings of the written word of God.” Fanaticism manifests itself variously in proportion to the different degrees of its influence on the mind. A friend of mine once gave me an account of a tour that he had taken in fanaticism as far as the

'prophetic degree.' He imagined himself commissioned as was Isaiah to Hezekiah, to go to an unconverted neighbor, and proclaim to him the message, that on such a night he would die! But he put off the solemn duty till the fatal night arrived. Then, 'burdened with the word of the Lord,' as he supposed, he called on the man to announce to him his awful end; but remaining till a late hour of the evening, finally left without opening his mouth for God! But his conviction of guilt was so great that he sat down by the way, and wept and groaned in an agony. "The man would die, and his blood be required at his hand! To return to his own house, and not do the preaching God bade him, would bring an irreversible curse from God." He resolved to arise in the name of the Lord and declare his word. He repaired again to his friend's house, (trembling lest he might be already dead, as it was now past midnight;) awoke the man, and did (as he supposed) the preaching that God bade him. He now felt clear, and returned praising the Lord for the sweet blessing on his obedience. His prediction failed, and for ought we know the doomed man lives yet. This man's tour in fanaticism but illustrates that of hundreds who have taken their feelings and fancies for the undoubted operations of God's spirit on the soul.

Fanaticism transcends all bounds. Once yield yourself to its influence, and there is no telling where you will stop. So long as Christians take the Bible for a guide, they are within just and sure reckoning: and may journey on in safety; God's word and spirit agree; but when any would be wise above what is written, and seek to go beyond written revelation in religious matters, they tread on dangerous ground, and no one can divine what error will take them up at last. Such are like a ship at sea, without helm, driven before the wind till she dashes, a total wreck, on some unseen rock. Many have gone into enthusiasm to that degree as to suppose themselves inspired of God to discern the

true character of others, to foretell future events, and even to work miracles. These false teachers, themselves deceived, and deceiving their followers, have, at various times, done immense mischief to the interests of Christianity. It is passing strange, after all the delusions that have been palmed off on the world, men should be so readily deceived. Witness the delusion of Mormonism, sustained as it is pretended by miracles; and yet making to itself thousands of converts. How unlike are such presumptuous pretensions, or the quackeries of Romanism in the dark ages, to the true miracles of Christ, his apostles, and the prophets? Let men but bring these vagaries of fanatics to the true tests of real miracles;\* and the supernatural

\* "A miracle," says Mr. Horne, "is an effect or event contrary to the established constitution or course of things; or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission, of God, and accompanied with previous notice or declaration that it is performed according to the purposes and power of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority or divine mission of some particular person." Such were the miracles of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles.

Mr. Horne gives the 'criteria of miracles' as follows:—"1. A miracle should have an important end in view, worthy of its author. 2. It must be instantaneously and publicly performed, before credible witnesses. 3. It must be sensible and easy to be observed; the fact purporting to be miraculous must be such that the senses of mankind can clearly and fully judge of it; and be independent of second causes. 4. Not only public monuments must be kept up, but some outward actions must constantly be performed, in memory of the fact thus publicly wrought. 5. Such monuments must be set up, and such actions and observances instituted at the very time when those events took place, and be afterwards continued without interruption."

How do the pretended miracles of Roman Catholics, Mormons, and all such fanatics, compare with the miracles recorded in the Bible? and how would they stand the test of comparison with the above criteria of real miracles? The miracles of Christ, of Moses, and the apostles, possess all these criteria; the pretended miracles of impostors, possess none of them. God gives miracles sparingly; otherwise their effect on men would be lost. Sufficient were given to establish the mission of Moses, and the more glorious mission of Christ; and Christianity having been established, miracles are no longer needed, and have ceased in the church.

pretensions of all such dreamers will be seen in all their nakedness, and those who have been duped, be restored again to the safe path of Divine Revelation.

Religious fanaticism has been somewhat peculiarly developed in connection with the unusual excitement of the Miller theory of the advent of Christ. The coming of the Savior at the end of the world is a most deeply interesting subject; and when for once a large number of professing Christians get it fixed in their minds that this most of all solemn events will occur in a few months, there is ample room for excitement, enthusiasm, and the wildest fanaticism, all of which have been sadly realized in connection with this strange religious movement. The saddest of effects have been realized by the churches, as many foresaw must be the result. Christians seeking to be wise above what was written—what revelations, visions, and dreams, were enthusiasts favored with! How speedily the veriest ignoramuses became teachers, lecturers and authors, able to unfold the deep things of God and his word as the plainest of truths to men of learning and talent and piety, that did not 'understand' their times! How direct the inference that they were more holy than other men! It were shocking to all delicacy to draw aside the curtain, and let men see the things done in the religious meetings of some among the most fanatical of these deluded 'adventists.' It is true, the more thoughtful did not countenance the wretched fanaticism of the more deluded; and we refer to it, just to show that the moment men set their fancies and dreams above the word of God, no man can tell where their fanaticism will end. "We are right, you wrong;" hence denunciation follows; and the cry is raised all over the land.—"Come out of Babylon"—"Leave the corrupt churches." And a regular-built, disorganizing, comeouter sect, are laboring sedulously to demolish the churches, and destroy every thing lovely and of good report in the kingdom of Christ. We say, then, Be-

ware of all such disorganizing efforts! Watch against the fanaticism that terminates so sadly.

6. Christians should watch against the flatteries of the world. To accomplish this, there must be decision to live for God. David could say, "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." God says of the righteous, "his heart is established." The time has been when religion was opposed by physical force; the strong arm of law has been raised, in successions of bloody persecutions, to crush the Christian church. But in all these, truth has triumphed; and the devil and ungodly men have seen that God's cause was not to be destroyed by such instrumentalities. The source of attack is now changed; and the flatteries of the world are employed against godliness with surprising effect. Instead of the church's dwelling in dens and caves of the earth, meeting in obscure places for worship lest their enemies should drag them forth to the martyr's stake, she now enjoys the nominal applause of the world; has become rich, and worships in her splendid temples, none daring to molest or make her afraid. But whither has fled the godly devotedness of primitive Christians? Their motto was, "Believe, love, labor, suffer." Alas! how have the flatteries of the world for centuries sapped the very life-blood of the Christian church!

The spirit of true religion is opposed to the spirit of a wicked world. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." How shall light dwell with darkness? When shall holiness and sin shake hands together? God has said to his people, *be ye separate*. Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Nay —if we would be the children of God 'in deed and in truth,' we must count "as dross" the flatteries and friendship of the ungodly. The language of every Christian should be—

"My soul forsakes her vain delights,  
And bids the world farewell;

Base is the dirt beneath my feet,  
 And mischievous as hell.  
 No longer will I ask your love,  
 Nor seek your friendship more;  
 The happiness that I approve,  
 Lies not within your power."

Conformity to the world in its unhallowed maxims, its vain recreations, and sinful amusements, has been death to the piety of many thousand young disciples of Jesus Christ; while worldly-mindedness, love of honor, and thirst of riches, have been equally ruinous to the spirituality and usefulness of multitudes in the church. The church in poverty and persecution, relying on God and spiritually consecrated to him, went forth in Divine power to shake the whole empire of darkness in the known world, and the cross triumphed everywhere; but when resources of worldly honor and riches were thrown open to her, though she actually became rich, what a sad decline has followed, in devotedness, benevolence, and spirituality! Where is now that holy consecration of ALL upon the altar of God, which once characterized the church? Has it not withered away under a worldly covetous spirit? If the immense treasures the church now possesses were offered up to God, as on the altar of apostolic and primitive sacrifice, how speedily would the world be illuminated with the gospel!

But the whole effect of this unhallowed disposition, is not seen in its sad work of paralyzing the efforts of Christian benevolence. It impoverishes the soul, and engenders a sickly, languid, feeble piety. For in proportion as conformity to the world obtains in the churches, Bible religion droops and dies. Wealth increases, pleasures allure, the world flatters;—step by step, religious duties are neglected, piety dwindles, and Christians backslide from God. O reader, watch against the first approaches of this snare of the devil, to destroy your soul. Remember that the "love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pieced them-

selves through with many sorrows." Rather let God's children "desire liberal things," and joyfully contribute, as "God hath prospered them," and as "faithful stewards," to the benevolent enterprises of the gospel. God shall reward them a hundred fold in their own bosoms. Let us remember that we are bought with a price!—and "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed into the image of Christ in all things, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

7. There is still a tempting devil, against whose wiles all who would live a holy life are to watch. I shall not attempt to show *why* satan, the prince of the powers of darkness, should be permitted to tempt men; nor to unfold *how* a fallen spirit may influence the human mind to sin; but from the revealed *fact* that the "devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," whom we are commanded to "resist steadfast in the faith," shall take the occasion to entreat the disciples of Christ to watch against his temptations—adapted, as they peculiarly are, to ruin precious souls for whom Christ died. In some way or other will this arch-deceiver be ever seeking to destroy the happiness and the usefulness of the saints. Young Christians are tempted to neglect their duties in the prayer meeting, as some older member takes no active part, and yet gets along quite as well; to omit closet duties, there being no use in praying so often; to participate in the mirth of the ungodly, as an innocent amusement; or otherwise conform to the world, as multitudes of professors do. If they are low in their minds, it is suggested that they are doing as well as others who possess the fellowship of the church, and there is no need of so much ado about religion. If well engaged and faithful, they are running too fast; or if cast down and dark in their minds, the temptation assumes another form, and the tempter suggests that all efforts to return fully to God are useless, as they will never enjoy themselves as they have done. Some are

tempted to over-value their gifts ; others, to undervalue theirs. If you possess an ability to sing, he would fain have you suppose you may sing yourself to heaven, and lead you to neglect other duties. Or if you do not possess this gift and the other, he would make you envious toward those who possess them. The poor are tempted to envy the rich ; the rich, to despise the poor. Satan will enter his dividing hoof, if the people of God will give any chance, and sow discord in church choirs, and disunion among churches. Against such a foe, let every Christian be on his guard. With fiery trials he dared even to tempt the holy Redeemer —will he not much more his dear followers ? Though he come as an angel of light, resist to him the sword of the spirit, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the weapon of all-prayer ;—resist him, and he shall flee from you ; draw nigh to God, and He shall draw nigh to you.

#### SECTION II. *What Christians are to watch for.*

1. For the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Great stress is properly laid upon the influences of the Spirit, in the New Testament instructions. “ For the law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” “ Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his : And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh ; for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Rom. chap. 8. Paul, with all his learning and experience in the habit of prayer, says, “ We know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the spirit itself maketh intercession for the saints with groanings that cannot be uttered.” Again he says, “ No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

Of such vital importance is this Divine influence in the work of salvation, that all men are solemnly charged 'not to quench it ;' and Christians specially exhorted, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption." From these texts we see—1. That it is by the agency of the Spirit that souls are set at liberty from the law of sin and death—2. Sealed unto the day of redemption—3. Have an abiding evidence of acceptance with God ; he bearing witness with our spirit or judgment, and inspiring the soul with confidence and hope—4. Helps our infirmities in prayer, making intercession for the saints according to the will of God—5. And that it may endanger and peril our eternal interests to resist and grieve away its influence.

Should not, then, all who are striving to advance in the Divine life, watch for the influences of the Holy Spirit? Can they dispense with this agency? By no means. But while we watch for the influence of the Holy Spirit, we are to be on our guard that we do take every emotion and feeling of our hearts, for this Divine impulse. We are to try the spirits, to see if they are of God, from an evil source, or of our own passions only; and it is a safe criterion that God's Spirit will never lead contrary to his written word. One's own emotions, taken for Divine impulses, may lead him far astray 'in countless errors lost.' The following circumstance is a case in hand :—An individual felt a strong impression of mind to attend Lord's day worship at a certain church. When he had come pretty near the place, the impression (of God's Spirit, as he supposed) directed him to return to his usual place of worship. He obeyed, and when he arrived there, behold the Spirit bade him retrace his steps again to the distant church ; and still obeying, when he had arrived, the meeting had just closed ! and the poor misguided man, instead of worshipping at either place, had spent the day in violation of God's command to keep the Sabbath holy. His own fanatical

emotions were contrary to the written word, and he should have known that God would not contradict himself. In the case which follows, there is nothing contradictory to the revealed word, and undoubtedly the mind was led by the Holy Spirit;—A brother journeying, on passing a particular house, was deeply impressed that he ought to go in, and converse and pray with the family. He excused himself with the plea that they were strangers, and passed on. The impression was renewed on his mind, as he drew near the house on his return; yet did he not yield to what he clearly felt was his duty. At home the impression of duty grew stronger. Several weeks elapsed; when he resolved to obey God, and went twenty-four miles to visit this same family. He found the husband and wife unconverted, but seriously inclined; he spent the night with them, conversed with and prayed for them. They were deeply impressed as he related the circumstance, and promised him they would immediately seek the Lord. A short time, and this brother's heart was refreshed with the cheering news that they had both sought and found the pearl of great price.

In the Miller excitement during 1842 and 1843, many professed to be led by the spirit to withhold their accustomed contributions from the Benevolent Societies, particularly from the Foreign Mission, as they imagined there would not be time for the money to do any good. But was not this impression directly contradictory to God's commands—"Preach the gospel to every creature"—" Occupy till I come." I have been the more particular on this point, from the fact that multitudes have suffered loss, by taking their own natural emotions, for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Christians should seek diligently for the aid of the Holy Spirit. As they are favored with the teaching of this heavenly guide, they will make greater attain-

ments in spirituality. The spirit gives life and energy to all the duties of religion; exhortation, singing, prayer. He takes the things of God and shows them unto us; unfolds the blessed truths of God's word; claims for us the promises; throws new attractions around the cross; begets a longing for God; helps to bear our burdens; purifies us from sin; brings the crown of glory near.

2. Watch the special *providences* of God. The events with which we are surrounded, are by no means a mass of accidents; they are either immediately ordered, or else permitted, by an all-wise Providence, who will direct and overrule all things for the good of his people. All these special providences should be watched with a design to make a just improvement of them. Has death entered your borders, your neighborhood or family, and taken a loved friend, brother, sister, parent, child, or bosom companion? It is God's rod that hath appointed this; "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." God has some design in this, in reference to yourself. He would awaken you to more engagedness in religion; quicken you to some neglected duty; wean you from earth. Have you met with unexpected losses in property? God would impress on you the well-nigh forgotten truth that "riches make to themselves wings and fly away." Have lost your health—are you thrown upon the bed of sickness? Is it not your Heavenly Father, leading you in this way, back to himself, from whom you had wandered? Let such afflictions be sanctified for the soul's good. Or is it a time of prevailing sickness and frequent deaths, in your town, is it not then a season especially for Christians to pray, and ministers to labor, for the salvation of souls? Pastors and brethren should watch such providences, as a peculiar season for religious efforts. Faithful labor, under such circumstances, may be successful, which might not be under ordinary circumstances.

Again. Do pastors feel the burden of the word of the Lord, a deep anxiety and travail of soul for the salvation of the impenitent—should not the churches labor to come up unitedly to their help, and co-operate with them in all the means of grace? Or if they do not, but hang as dead weights on the hands of their religious teachers, may not the blood of souls be found on the skirts of their garments? The islands of the sea stretch forth their hands for the gospel of Christ—whole villages of heathen break their badges of idolatry, and ask for Christian teachers—the Ottoman Empire, and China with their hundreds of millions, are made accessible to the missionaries of Calvary's cross—are not these the providences of God? Facilities in travelling—in printing—vast increases of wealth in the churches—and does not God have designs in all these? Shall the church of Christ sleep, while in such ways, God opens up her duty, and magnifies her responsibility?

3. Christians should watch for opportunities to *do good*. The benevolent spirit of Christianity will not admit of a life of inactivity, while there are so many opportunities to do good. None who have been born of God are at liberty to live uselessly; they are bought and redeemed, that they may labor in Christ's vineyard; and they should watch for opportunities to do good. These will open on all hands. Has a new family moved into your place that has not yet found the way to the house of God—or have you neighbors who do not attend at the sanctuary—or are there children who are not found in your Sabbath school? These friends are in their sins, and on the road to ruin. You may do them good; may show your zeal for God, and love of souls, by visiting such, and bringing them within the influence of the gospel. God has thrown these friends within your immediate influence, that they may become stars in your crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. You will be held responsible for the efforts you make to lead such souls to Christ. Do you seek

out such occasions for doing good by winning souls to Christ? Are you putting forth personal efforts with this great object in view? If conscious of neglect, awake to duty without delay.

Have you in your own family or among your own particular friends, one who is a stranger to experimental religion? Then you have a special opportunity for doing good. *Improve it*, as you estimate a soul! Have you an unconverted youth in your employment? You possess an opportunity that no other person possesses, to influence him to give his heart to God. Or have you a young disciple in your family? Encourage him to use the means of a growth in grace and in the knowledge of Divine things. If Christians generally were anxious to improve their opportunities for doing good as they should be, how many would be prevailed upon to go to the house of God, and so be put in the way of salvation, who are Sabbath breakers, and living without God in the world! And this might often be done with but little effort and time. With the proper effort by churches as well as pastors, many small congregations would be greatly enlarged, and hundreds of souls hear the gospel, who now are scarcely ever found at God's house. This is a point that has been too much overlooked by Christians. But is it not a sinful negligence, not to feel enough interested in doing good to improve such facilities? Let conscience answer. And are there not cases where the pious, possessing the means abundantly, are in solemn duty bound to clothe up poor and neglected children and bring them into the Sabbath school and the sanctuary? Because some children are so unfortunate as to have intemperate parents who may not care for their souls, are orphans or worse than orphans, are these reasons why they should be left to grow up in sin, uneducated in religion? Nay, verily—let Christians seek out such, clothe them, and bring them into God's house.

The room of sickness and suffering, affords to brethren and sisters in the church, as well as the minister, opportunities for doing good. "I was sick, and ye visited me:—in as much as ye have done it unto one of these, ye have done it unto me." Is your friend or neighbor shut up in the room of sickness and suffering, his heart melted within him—go, administer to his wants; point him to the Savior. He is your brother or sister in Christ, and needs your sympathy, your pious conversation, your prayers. Or he is in his sins without a hope beyond the grave; and needs instruction and prayers. Go often to the sick room; visit your fellow beings in the hour of affliction. Go, not only minister, but go brethren and sisters in the church, go nursing fathers and mothers. It is a seed time, a softening, melting time. Let not such opportunities for doing good be wasted; watch for them.

In every way seek to do good. Has wealth, or office, or power, placed you in this respect above many; enabled you to reach minds that the poor or the unlearned Christian cannot? Does not God speak in this? Does not He require you to employ the influence which these give you, to promote his cause? What avails it that you are learned, or are clothed with influence, possess great talents, unless you employ all these facilities to save souls, and promote the knowledge of Christ? Influence is power. It matters not through what channel it comes, by wealth, education, or piety alone, it is to be thrown on the side of truth. If, in the providence of God, you have been thus favored above others, remember that for this you must give account to God. But every Christian has an influence, some more, some less; whether five talents, or two, or one, "occupy." Watch for opportunities. Do good unto all men.

4. Again—Christians should watch for opportunities for receiving good. We need to add to our attainments in spirituality, and usefulness in the church. There are abundant means for this. How many op-

portunities are mis-spent, which if rightly improved, would promote the intelligent piety of the saints ! How often is religious conversation excluded from the social circle, and time spent to no profit ! If such seasons were rightly improved, when the social visit closes, Christians would part refreshed by pious conversation, and a free interchange of views and feelings. It is a serious loss of opportunity for receiving good, that religion is so often excluded from the social visits of such even as profess to love God.

I am confident that young Christians do not duly appreciate the church, conference and social prayer meeting, as means especially of good to their own souls. The condition of these meetings is a pretty good index of the state of active piety in a church ; and they are to be attended from conviction of its being duty to attend them, and in the hope of doing good ; but do not many fail to appreciate their full power of imparting good to all faithful Christians. They are often made seasons of spiritual refreshings, whose influence on the heart lasts for days. How strengthening and encouraging, are such communions of saints ! And the preached gospel, the sanctuary where the gospel is expounded, explained, enforced—strange, that for trivial excuses, any should be neglectful of public worship.

Still another means for the reception of great good, is not fully appreciated, though it lies open to all—I mean religious reading. If the hours that are spent in idleness or vanity by many young professors, were devoted to useful reading, storing the mind with important knowledge, what an increase of intelligence and enlightened piety would obtain in the churches ! How vastly more permanent and efficient our efforts for the cause of God. O, dear brethren, and especially, my youthful readers, do not neglect this means for receiving good, under the enjoyment of such facilities as God gives to Zion at this favored period. Let every day add to your present stock of knowledge and grace.

5. Finally—Let Christians watch for DEATH and the JUDGMENT. The solemn day approaches. “In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.” Are you living with solemn thoughts of death and judgment in mind? Men are too apt to look on these subjects in the distance; consequently they do not suitably affect the mind, and influence the conduct. Suppose death now at your door, are you prepared to meet your Judge? While neglecting to live for eternity today, are you hoping to do better to-morrow? Ah! reader, such is the delusive expectation of the wicked! Christians should live *to-day* as if they expected to meet God in the judgment at any moment. Let scoffers, and Universalists, if they will, ridicule the idea of Christ’s second coming and an eternal judgment; yet “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner” as he ascended to heaven. Acts 1:11. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first;—in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” 1 Thess. 4:16; and 2 Thess. 1:8, 9, 10. These passages are so plain that the sincere will not mistake them; ~~and~~ whoever wrests their solemn meaning, does it at his own peril. A solemn judgment—the separation of the redeemed and the lost—a long eternity! Death is not an “eternal sleep.” Let the living prepare to meet their God.

“The Lord will come! and dreadful form,  
With wreath of flame, and robe of storm,  
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,  
Anointed Judge of human kind!—  
Go, tyrants, to the rocks proclaim;  
Go, seek the mountain’s cliff in vain;

But faith victorious e'er the tomb,  
Shall sing for joy—the Lord is come !"

O reader ! Watch for your dying day ; and in all that you do, do it in reference to the day of your death, and the solemn judgment to which you are hastening. Think of it—live for it—pray that you may be prepared to meet it.

## CHAPTER V.

## ON PRAYER.

The subject of prayer is one with which all Christians are supposed to be acquainted ; a subject on which much has been said and written. It is the constant breathing of every living Christian ; the element of every spiritual soul on earth. Prayer has been defined as follows : "The offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name and through the mediation of Jesus Christ, by the help of the Holy Spirit, with the confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This appears to be a full and Scriptural definition. Miss Hannah More defines prayer thus : "Prayer is the application of want to Him who alone can relieve it, the voice of sin to Him who alone can pardon it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of trust. It is not eloquence, but earnestness, not figures of speech, but compunction of soul. It is the 'Lord, save us, we perish,' of a drowning Peter ; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy." David said, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." Prayer, then, is not a few faint desires ; but the language of the heart to that degree of fervor which raises the soul to God.

*SECTION I. The nature and characteristics of true genuine prayer.*

1. It must be offered in *sincerity*. God abhors hypocrisy in every religious duty. He knows the heart, and will regard prayer according to the suppliant's sincerity. You may deceive men, but God you cannot. If the heart is not sincere in this offering made directly to God, our prayers are but a 'chattering noise.' Shall we ask God to make duty known, and then be unwilling to obey Him ? Shall we pray for a meek and quiet disposition, while we yet intend to indulge in pride ?

Of all places, at the mercy seat, in audience with the Deity, let our motive be sincere.

2. True prayer is *contrite*. Go to God with a heart of contrition, with a soul broken down into tenderness. Otherwise prayer will be like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. With what penitence David prayed, is evinced by the penitent language of the 51st Psalm. The penitence of the returning prodigal, should mark our addresses to a heart-searching and holy God.

3. Genuine prayer is *fervent*. Why should any deceive themselves with the thought that cold, heartless, formal petitions are acceptable before Heaven? Had such services been what God required, who had been holier than the Pharisees, whitened sepulchres as they were? "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions." Many are dead while they have a name to live, because there is no fervency in their prayers. But how prayed Bartimeus? Think of his fervor; "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me," arose in unyielding earnestness above the chiding of those who cried 'peace.' How did Moses plead with God for Israel! How Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the covenant till break of day! Such is true prayer! Such the effectual fervent prayer, that prevails with God.

4. Prayer must be *persevering*. God would have his people importune, pressing their suit until the blessing is obtained. The Savior's instructions are full on this vital point. If you would know the true nature of prayer, think of the friend who would give three loaves to one's importunity which he had refused to his friendship—of the widow who by her continual coming wearied into compliance to her prayer the unjust judge, who regarded not man nor feared God—and of Christ's application of these parables: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "And shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry day and night unto him?" Mark Elijah's perseverance in prayer. No rain had fallen on Palestine for three and a half long years, ac-

cording to the word of the prophet ; earth was parched, and a great nation was in danger of perishing. Elijah ascends Carmel to pray for rain. He bowed in supplication before God. The servant is bid to look out upon the sea, for signs of rain. There are none. Did the prophet cease to plead ? No. He perseveres, and watches for an answer to his prayer. Again the servant replies that he sees nothing. Again does the Tishbite bow his head between his knees. His whole soul goes up to God. ‘Where is the Jehovah who answered by fire?’ It comes to be “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.” It prevails. The ‘seventh’ time his servant returns to him, and announces “a cloud of the bigness of a man’s hand,” discernible in the distant horizon. The man of God goes down from the mount ; the heavens gather blackness, and pour down torrents of rain ; earth yields her increase ; a nation is saved. Prayer had moved God ! James cites us to this, as teaching the nature, and duty, and blessing, of true persevering prayer. Elijah was a man of like passions with us.

Reader, are you not conscious of having failed to secure many blessings by not continuing in prayer ? O, what losses have been sustained by Zion, through this defect ! A few prayers are offered for a revival ; but because no cloud arises, because the revival comes not at once, Christians give way to unbelief, cease to importune, and all efforts are relaxed. Or, a short season is spent in prayer for the conversion of some dear friend ; but if the individual is not converted almost immediately, the solemn subject is dropped, and we give over. It ought not to be so. If Christians would see a revival, see a beloved friend converted, or have their own souls filled with the fullness of God, let them be often at, and linger long around, the throne of grace.

5. Men are to pray in faith. They should claim the promises of Scripture, and plead them before the throne, confidently expecting their fulfillment in answer to prayer. We are instructed to come boldly to the

throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. They who come to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him. Why should not the saints of God believe that he will hear their prayers? Could he have said more to encourage their faith? Knows a parent to give good things to his child—God is more ready to give them that ask him. “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.” And is not God to be believed? He has given special encouragements to prayer. Plant your feet firmly on these promises of God, and plead them in faith, and you shall prevail. Did he not hear Abraham’s intercessions for guilty Sodom? Was not his ear open to the groans of the Israelites in bondage? Did not Nehemiah and Daniel, in Zion’s captivity, find acceptance and audience of God? Paul and Silas pray at midnight: the church makes supplication for Peter; God’s messengers are sent to liberate the apostles. And has he not in all ages, given answer to the prayer of faith? Why then not have faith in God. Redeemed saint, did not God hear and deliver, when you cried to him from the pit burdened with sin? Yes, glory to his blessed name, he heard, and mercy descended upon your soul. And has he not since, in answer to prayer, often scattered darkness from your mind, removed doubts and fears, and filled your troubled breast with peace? Then thou knowest now where to find him. Go to the altar believing. “What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Heb. 11:24.

6. Prayer is to be accompanied with confession of sins, and thanksgiving. How unbecoming in sinful man, to approach God in prayer, against whom we have all sinned, and not make confession of his sins; or to ask for mercies, without rendering thanks for the ten thousand blessings already bestowed! Paul and Silas, in prison and in stocks, “prayed and sang praises to God.” Daniel says, “I prayed and made confession.”

"Let thine ear now be attentive," says Nehemiah, "and thine eye open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee; both I and my father's house have sinned." Neh. 1:6. "Thanksgiving is also as necessary as confession; by the one, we take shame to ourselves; by the other, we give glory to God. By the one, we abase the creature; by the other, we exalt the Creator. In petitioning favors from God, we act like dependent creatures; in confession, like sinners; but in thanksgiving, like angels."

7. Men are to pray in submission. When we have made our supplication in earnest perseverance, the whole is then to be submitted to God. Here Christ is our example. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt." "Thy will be done," is the language and the spirit of true prayer. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him." 1 John 5:14, 15. Our prayers should be regulated according to the revealed will of God, and come within the promises made. Thus offered according to God's will, they will receive an answer.

8. Prayer must be made in the name of Jesus. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, no merits to present. The merits of our Redeemer are to be our only plea before God. We are instructed to present our supplications in his name. "Whosoever ye ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it." O, the heavenly promise! Remember—in Christ's name. Suppose an indigent person in special want of money. He goes to the Bank, and asks for it in his own name; pleads before the cashier his distressed circumstances; all is in vain. The bank

does not so unlock its vaults. But let him produce a check, with a proper signature, and his wants are at once relieved. So sinners will come to God in vain in their own name. But when by faith they lay hold of the Son of God, our appointed Advocate, and in his name present their prayer, they are sure of success. Jesus lives to intercede. What could the burdened sinner, what the weary pilgrim do, but for that all-prevailing name? Name ever dear—ever sure to gain access at mercy's seat, and secure salvation to the perishing. O, how should the people of God be encouraged to plead for spiritual blessings, since Jesus, their High Priest in the heavens, bears their names before God, ever living to make intercession for them! Look, ye doubting—see him spreading his bleeding hands before the Father for you! Will you not be encouraged to pray always, coming in his name, and resting your eternal all in the hands of your crucified but risen Savior? Here is safety—here is rest: Come boldly to the throne of grace.

#### SECTION II. *Of the Duty of Prayer.*

Every command of God is binding on all moral creatures, and to be obeyed on the principle of its being *right*, and it should be a sufficient motive to obedience that He has commanded it. On this principle Christians should live, obeying God from sense of duty. Prayer is positively commanded. In addition to positive command, the duty of prayer is argued from several considerations.

1. Our ignorance shows us the duty of prayer: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Says Christ, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Like Mary, we are to sit at his feet, and inquire at the throne of his grace. "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." When, Christian reader, have you made the greatest proficiency in spiritual knowledge? Has it not been on your knees before

God ! How has prayer opened to your view celestial riches, and enlightened your understanding with the saving knowledge of God and his word. We know not what shall be on the morrow ; we tread a wilderness, and know not what way to take. Our ignorance urges the propriety that we should continually ask the guidance of God's blessed spirit.

2. In himself the Christian is perfect weakness. What is the strongest disciple without God ? How would you withstand temptations ? How fruitless all efforts to do good, without the Divine blessing ! What are the most solemn exhortations, the most eloquent sermons, if prayer does not give them life and edge ? Should not weak and feeble man, go for help to the fountain of strength ? Powerless in ourselves, to think a good thought or act for God, resist the tempter, or progress in holiness—let it drive us to the throne of grace, and to cry mightily in prayer, Awake for us, O arm of the Lord.

3. The depravity of the human heart should be an incitement to prayer. To what an alarming depth has sin sunk into the soul ! How widely are its effects diffused through our natures ! Many who had fondly indulged the hope that they had obtained a full victory over the corruptions of the heart, have yet been led to exclaim, "It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" ! Why so few of those eminently holy men whose biography is summarily given in the Scriptures, have no stain of sin upon their character ? Is not an answer found in the solemn fact, that man is fallen ? Or what but this induced Paul to say, "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven—not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" ? Poor mortality crushed before the moth, inborn corruptions giving rise to the warfare against flesh and blood, will lead God's true people to seek in much prayer for a present victory over sin, a conquest over the world, the flesh, and the

devil ; and to sigh for the immortality of their house in heaven.

4. The moral state of the world, imposes prayer as the duty of all Christians. Scarcely had Jesus gone through the land of Palestine, ere he exclaimed, " O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." In every direction idolatry and sin reigned ; and thick moral darkness hung over the land. Men were perishing for lack of vision ; worshipping stocks of wood and stone, or attending to the externals of Judaism, and neglecting the light of the gospel now dawning upon them. Many centuries have rolled away ; the gospel has now glorious triumphs ; and yet we may adopt the language of the apostle John—" The whole world lieth in wickedness," comparatively speaking. Darkness covers the greater portion of the earth entirely, without a single ray of gospel light ; and in nominal Christendom, false doctrines are spreading, errors multiplying ; three millions at our own door are groaning beneath the iron yoke of slavery in the worst form upon which the sun ever shone ; intemperance and licentiousness are awfully common in both low and high places. Can Christians view this state of things, and yet restrain prayer ? Can the reader think on the moral aspect which the world to-day presents, and not have it in his heart to cry to God for the gracious descent of the Holy Spirit ? May heaven breathe upon us the spirit of prayer !

5. The present condition of the church is an argument on the duty of prayer. How many nominal Christians, and professedly evangelical churches, are dead as to the spirit and power of vital religion ! How many churches are without pastors, and destitute of the ordinances of the gospel. We fear that multitudes have their names enrolled in the churches, who have wandered far from God, and are doing nothing to promote the Redeemer's kingdom among men. A covetous, worldly, selfish spirit, has closed up the purses of thousands to a just liberality for the benevolence which Christianity

enjoins for evangelizing the nations, to such a degree that one lecture on some subject appealing to their charity is enough to destroy their peace for a series of meetings, if not for months afterwards. How far, alas ! is Zion from being all that she should be, a light for the whole world ! How deficient in spiritual life and love ! There is a sad want of union and evenness among the followers of the Lamb of God. How many ministers at her altar are not baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire ! It is admitted there are many things in the church at the present day that are encouraging ; but there are also many other things which urge loudly the duty of fervent effectual prayer. Prayer has so far marked all the advancements of the gospel ; so it is to be in the future. Will you not pray for Zion ? for her purity and prosperity ? for her ministry ? for her increase and her glory ?

6. In addition to the above reasons for the duty of prayer, let it not be forgotten that God enjoins it by immediate command, "Pray without ceasing." Jesus spake a parable to this end, "that men ought always to pray and not to faint." "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your request be made known to God." "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." Such are the commands of God on the duty of prayer. It should seem that nothing more needs be said to urge its high importance. Men who have been most useful in the church, have always been men of much prayer. Witness Luther, Randall, Payson, and thousands of others in every age of the church. We are dependent on God for all spiritual blessings ; and prayer is the appointed means by which they flow to us through Christ.

### SECTION III. *The several kinds of prayer considered.*

Prayer is commonly divided into private, domestic, and social.

PRIVATE OR SECRET PRAYER. This duty is clearly taught by the Savior in these words : "When thou

prayest, enter into thy closet." Matt. 6:6. The 'closet' may mean any place of retirement that we may choose, in which to commune with God in secret supplication. Thus Jesus, "rising up a great while before day, went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35. This 'solitary place' was a mountain, as we learn from Matt. 14:23, and Luke 6:12. The Savior had been publicly teaching a multitude, and having sent them away, repairs to a mountain alone, to commune with his Father. An excellent example for all his disciples to imitate. As they leave the assembly of public worship, they should enter their 'closets,' to seek a blessing on themselves and on others in another means of grace enjoyed. Secret prayer is one of the most essential duties of the Christian. True religion cannot exist and flourish without it. The moment this duty is dispensed with, that moment dates the spiritual declension of the neglecter. The privileges and blessings of private prayer are great. None can at all times so freely pour out their whole soul in the presence of others, as when alone with God. Here one breathes out his wants in unrestrained thoughts and words. Freely they confess all at the mercy seat, and waft their souls to God. The language of every pious heart is—

"I love to steal awhile away  
From every cumb'ring care,  
And spend the hours of setting day  
In humble, grateful prayer."

I love in solitude to shed  
The penitential tear,  
And all his promises to plead,  
Where none but God can hear."

The 'closet' possesses many advantages for self-examination and spiritual communion. Some unholy affections, or concealed wrongs, may be undiscovered in our hearts or our lives, till, by faithful examination by ourselves alone with God, they shall be revealed. In secret devotions we look on ourselves as we do not when in company; as we also get nearer to God our

Savior. Here Christ shows himself to his disciples the one altogether lovely ; and their full souls cry out for the living God. With what delight do Christians love to linger in that blessed retreat which they have chosen for prayer ! Spiritual life and immortal vigor are imparted in these holy communings, which shall enable the soul to bear the cross before the world.

Private prayer tends to raise the soul above the transitory things of earth. Where, Christian reader, have you enjoyed the most refreshing views of the glories of the upper world ? Has it not been in the closet ? Yes, while wrapt in the warm devotions of secret supplication, Jesus has revealed himself in his brightest glories to your soul, and kindled within you new desires for holiness. You have sweetly felt then in these exercises—

“Wide he unveils celestial worlds,  
Where deathless pleasures reign,  
And bids us seek our portion there,  
Nor bids us seek in vain ;  
Shows us the precious promises, sealed  
With the Redeemer’s blood,  
And helps our feeble hope to rest  
Upon a faithful God.”

Christian friend, is it not your experience, that the more you pray in secret, the more you love to do it ? Has not the time passed on your knees in the closet, been the most precious and most profitable portions of your life ? Has it not been here that your soul has taken the sweetest flight toward the celestial city, soared the highest amid the spiritual regions, and looked down upon the world as beneath your feet ? Have you ever had recourse to your closets, in the time of temptations or afflictions, and not found the Lord a present help in the time of need ?

Secret prayer, like all other religious duties, requires *system*. “Order is Heaven’s first law,” and system must be observed, in order to religious prosperity. In none is it more important than in this duty. Formerly, God’s people were scrupulously exact in their religious

duties. David says, "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice." Ps. 55:17. When the decree of Darius went forth, forbidding prayer to God, Daniel continued his system, and "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God." All Christians should have stated seasons for devotion, from which no ordinary business should be allowed to divert them ; and these are to be observed let our 'feelings' be what they may.

**DOMESTIC OR FAMILY PRAYER.** The relation of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, are the most endearing and intimate on earth, these mutually bearing the sorrows or joys and dividing the ills of life among each other ;—nothing can, therefore, be more rational and lovely than *religion in the family*. Religion in the domestic circle will always strengthen the various bonds of union and love, and cement the hearts of the various members of families.

The duty of family prayer is enjoined from the *practice* of holy men of God ; and is supposed to have been so well understood as the clear duty of the pious, as scarcely to need a positive command for it. Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, there he erected an altar to God ; before which his household witness his devotions and prayers. After the public sacrifices on the joyful occasion of retaking the ark of the God of Israel, it is written, "Then David returned to bless his household." 2 Sam. 6:20. With all his public engagements he did not overlook the worship of God in his own family. Frequent mention is made of the Savior's retiring from his public ministrations, to pray alone with his disciples. The duty is also directly inferred from the language of Jeremiah : "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, *and upon the families that call not on thy name*." Jeremiah 10:25. Again, God has given this command to parents, to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. 6:4. The religion of the Bible is al-

ways eminently practical. Pious parents, ye to whom God has given children with the solemn charge—Take this child and bring it up for me—will you, dare you, omit family religion? If you have hitherto neglected it, erect now at once the family altar.

Much of the interest, and consequently of the profit, of domestic prayer, depends upon *the order in which it is conducted*. It should be seasonable—not omitting it until late in the evening, when some members of the family are so sleepy as not to feel interested in it, or others have already retired. Morning is an appropriate time for family devotions, either immediately before, or immediately after, breakfast. The whole family should be present, and all give their attention to the devotions; work is to be dispensed with, and every one be in his place. The exercises at the family altar should be short, and in some measure governed by the passing events. All the family, as far as practicable, should take a part, in reading and singing, and if pious, their turn in prayer, or occasionally bear a religious part. Pious mothers, we should hope, will endeavor to keep up family devotions in the absence of their husbands. Domestic prayer should be constant—daily, at morn and evening. At meals, the pious should render thanksgiving to God. Read Matt. 15:36; Acts 27:35, &c.

The moral and religious tendency of family prayer is good in several ways. The individual who leads in prayer is blessed. You may sometimes feel tried and tempted, cold-hearted, and daily prayer in your family appear a burden; or you may think your family is tired with the continued return of the same duty. Such temptations will assail you; but shall you yield to them? Nay, verily. Think of your solemn responsibilities; and remember how often, as you have bowed around the domestic shrine, God has poured out his rich treasures of grace upon your soul; and above all, remember that *it is duty*. It also exerts a happy influence upon your family, especially upon children.

They become early impressed with a sense of the worth and importance of religion, from its daily exhibition in their juvenile years. Impressions that will be felt through their whole life, are often made on their tender minds. Indeed, the children of devotedly pious parents are usually among those who embrace Christ in youth. It also essentially aids the pious members of the family to progress in religion. And the influence of family religion is felt on the church; and it affords great encouragement to your pastor in his arduous labors. He will expect to find those members who "show piety at home" warm-hearted Christians abroad, and prepared to exert a healthful influence in the church.

If there is a sight truly lovely on earth, a scene most like heaven, I have thought it to be this, to see a whole family kneel around the family altar in solemn worship of God. I say 'kneel,' for I suppose that all who enjoy religion will choose this position in preference to any other during family prayer. It was on such an occasion that an angel 'stood before' Cornelius, who no doubt listened with an angel's interest, to the devotions of that godly man. I do not doubt but these heavenly messengers often gather about the devotions of the domestic altar. O, the pleasing thought, that saints and angels already commingle in the same worship of the One Great God. Thus family worship will improve the heart, and lead to a closer walk with God.

SOCIAL OR PUBLIC PRAYER. This is commanded in the word of God. See James 5:16. Moreover, we are social beings; are constantly receiving social blessings from the hand of the Lord; and we ought to assemble together to render to God devout acknowledgments and praise. Are constantly in want of social blessings; and we should meet together unitedly to ask them of God. So important is this duty, and so just the reasonableness of it, that, universally, good men regard it as a means for the reformation of society and regeneration of mankind. The tendency of social pray-

er cannot be otherwise than beneficial to the highest degree. Men assemble together for prayer, and it becomes a union of heart with heart, and spirit with spirit. The enemy of all good could not so easily separate God's people, if they prayed together as much as they ought. In such gatherings of believers the Savior has especially promised his presence and blessing. See Matt. 18:20. And does he not always verify this gracious promise? He has ; making the prayer circle as the gate of heaven. The poet well says,

" His mercy visits every house,  
That pay their night and morning vows;  
But makes a more delightful stay,  
Where churches meet to praise and pray."

Those who neglect the prayer meetings of the church are neglecting one of the richest means of grace. No one duty lying in the Christian's pathway, so disposes the affections and the soul for God, so prepares us for heaven, as prayer. And if we love our closets, and the family altar, we shall appreciate social prayer. *Mental prayer*, or short ejaculations frequently put up to the Father of mercies, " arrows that enter heaven," as one calls them, will be found useful, and conducive to spiritual mindedness. O, then, let the mind be stayed on God, and be constantly ascending in holy communings with the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity.

## CHAPTER VI.

## UNBELIEF—FAITH IN GOD.

All who profess to believe the instructions of Revelation are ready to condemn unbelief, and to class it as among the most soul-damning sins of which men can be guilty;—yet how much of unbelief and doubting there is among many professed Christians,—or rather, is it not an easily besetting sin, which more or less all Christ's disciples are to guard against? But particularly, there are not a few in whom unbelief seems almost to be a marked trait in their character. Of all sins which the Christian character develops as antagonist to a holy life, none are more difficult of management than a doubting disposition. The doubting here contemplated does not arise so much from a disbelief of the general truths of the gospel, as from the individual's views of his own character and prospects. Doubting Christians cannot persuade themselves that they have feelings like others; and on this account they sigh and mourn. If they see a fellow disciple unusually happy in the Savior's love, they exclaim, "I do not feel so—I fear my hope is in vain, and that I have never been truly converted." They converse with other Christians, and although in fact they cannot see any material difference in their experiences, yet it seems settled in their minds, that others enjoy a certain 'something' that themselves cannot define, which they do not enjoy. They are confident that they have taken a right view of their state, and no argument can drive them from it. O, cruel unbelief! If they feel, as sometimes they do, to rejoice and praise God aloud, they will restrain these emotions, lest some should think they *are making it* themselves. Hence they stifle their religious feelings, grieve away God's tender spirit, and wander on still in the dark. Encourage such disciples to bear the cross, and wait upon the Lord that they may "renew their strength," and you are

invariably answered; “it will do no good.” Again unbelief sinks them more deeply in darkness. If you urge them to the performance of duty, the way to be blest—the reply is, “I do not believe I shall feel any better.” If their usefulness is urged as a motive to Christian faithfulness, the cold reply is made, “I cannot do any good, I had better get religion myself first.” It scarcely need be added, how poorly such remarks become the Christian name. Tell such of the precious promises of the gospel; they apply them to others, rather than to themselves. However cheering these are to the believing soul, they yield but little consolation to them. Try what means you will to aid such, and wicked unbelief evades the sweetest consolations of the Divine word. How ingeniously calculated is such a state of mind to prostrate every faculty of the soul, and render useless, as well as unhappy, the lives of doubting and desponding professors of the gospel.

But let us look after the cause of so much of unbelief and so many doubts, in a large class of professors. “But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, *are not wise.*” 2 Cor. 2:10. Who does not see that this is the case with the characters under contemplation? They say they do not feel like others; do not have such views and enjoyments as others; the promises which apply to other believers do not apply to them. Thus they are perpetually “measuring themselves” and “comparing themselves” according to the hopes and joys, and experience of others. God says that such *are not wise.* What say you, reader, that are one of the doubting, unbelieving ones? Dost not see the ‘folly’ of such a course? Suppose that Peter and Paul are favored with a social interview in the days of their pilgrimage, and they improve the opportunity to converse of their personal Christian experience. Peter takes the lead in the conversation; and after telling the exercises of his mind, and his views of the heavenly world, Paul commences to give a relation of his. He tells of his won-

derful conversion, to all which Peter listens with interest—until he speaks of being caught up into the third heaven, and that he there heard words which it were not lawful to utter! Peter's countenance falls—tears profusely flow—and Paul is anxious to know the cause of these tears: when Peter begins thus:—"I am afraid I have been deceived—I never had such views as you have had;—all my hope is vain!" Would not Paul have said, *thou art not wise, brother Peter?* Did Paul's visions in the 'third heaven' at all lessen the piety of Peter? No. And indeed, would not the pious feelings of Peter compare equally as well as Paul's, with the general doctrine of the Bible? "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your *faith*, even the salvation of your souls." 1 Pet. 1:8, 9; and, "By grace are ye *sayed through faith*." If those who are constantly complaining of their doubts, "comparing themselves by themselves," would study the word of God to find out what promises are there found to meet their case, and would 'embrace' them by a living faith and holy prayer, they should obtain grace to overcome their doubts, and arise to shine as lights in the world.

I ask, what is the result of so much unbelief upon professed believers? While doubting Christians sit down to mourn over themselves, and to sigh that they are not as others are, what consequence shall we look for? Unquestionably their indulgence of doubts and fears, *will keep them away from God*. Duties will be omitted, because but little blessing comes down upon duties performed with but half a heart. Prayer will be in part neglected, because prayer mingled with so much unbelief does not reach the throne. Other duties will be shrunk from, because they feel so unworthy! I ask, what shall be the result? What is the result? And I answer—a multitude of **FREEBLE DISCIPLES** in the churches; sickly, weak, and inefficient professors of the glorious gospel. This is the result—the legitimate

result of unbelief! “Feeble disciples”—it cannot be otherwise, so long as doubts, and brooding over and complaining about doubts, keep thousands back from prayer, and from persevering efforts to glorify God by a holy devotedness in the duties, of an active piety and practical self-denying godliness.

What is the remedy, it may be asked, for a feeble, sickly, and inefficient piety. I reply—Let Christians “have faith in God”! And I hope to exculpate the gospel from the charge of laying a foundation for unbelief, by showing that *Bible Christianity* makes provision for God’s people to be “strong in faith, giving glory to God,” and “abounding in good works,” together with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Let us hear what the gospel says of that faith which overcomes the world.

It has pleased God to attach very great importance to evangelical faith. When the disciples of Jesus inquired of him what they should do that they might work the works of God, Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” This seems to lay the foundation upon which the superstructure is to be raised. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” That confidence in God which the apostle admonished his Hebrew brethren not to cast away, having “great recompence of reward.” A state of careless indifference, or of inglorious sloth, is a very different thing from trusting in the Lord in the exercise of that “faith which worketh by love.” There is, if I may so say, a dead faith; but as it accomplishes nothing, it is worth nothing; like the presumption of Pharaoh that he could cross the sea as well as Moses; or like ungodly Universalists, who presume God will save all men, and so live on in sin. And there is, if I may so say, a living faith. This is the faith in God for which we contend, and which is shown by works of an active and holy life.

Christians are to walk by faith, not by sight. Sometimes we hear brethren say they mean to "live by principle," by which it is supposed they mean, that the great principles of Christ's gospel, and not merely their 'feelings,' shall regulate their conduct in religious matters, and this is correct; but we suppose it a better phraseology to say, "We mean to "live by faith,'" trusting in the Lord. Frames, feelings, or good resolutions, are often transient and fleeting; but a living trust and steadfast confidence in God, will conduct to holiness and heaven. The eleventh chapter of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, is a simple narrative of the glorious deeds of faith. Let doubting Christians draw instruction from it. And other chapters might now be added to it, were the achievements of Faith all recorded. The righteousness of faith, saith an apostle, speaketh on this wise: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." I ask, does not the blessed gospel afford sufficient promises and consolations to make happy and abundantly useful all Christians who believe God, and embrace its glorious hopes? Most certainly. Why, then, go mourning all our days? Why yield to doubts and groveling fears? Purify your hearts, and overcome your unbelief by faith. Like for God, consecrate all upon his altar, and your path shall shine more and more unto the perfect day.

The question hinges on this. Has God given such promises in his word as to enable the believer to rest upon them by simple faith? I am persuaded that he has. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "Fear not thou, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteous-

ness." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "My grace is sufficient for thee." Such are some of the promises contained in God's word. And God has informed us how we may have access to them, and apply them as ours : "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access *by faith* into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." Faith and prayer—O, blessed means ! Here we not only learn *how* to obtain grace, but are commanded to come to God that we may find *grace to meet every emergency*. As the professed followers of God all Christians are bound to believe, by everything sacred in truth.

In view of all the fullness there is in God and in the gospel, we exhort. If any person is laboring under doubts and fears whether he has been truly born of God ? let him trust in the Lord with all his heart ; feel that here is his only hope ; cleave steadfastly to the promises ; and linger around the mercy seat in persevering prayer—God shall help him, and that right early. Are any beset with severe temptations, until they have concluded their trials are greater than other men's ? Let them believe that God will make a way for their escape, according to his word ; and feel that so long as they trust in their Redeemer, they can never fall, with such a prop as the 'everlasting arms' underneath them. Do others despond, because of the unfavorable circumstances of their situation ? Remember—"My grace is sufficient for thee ; as thy day so my grace." Can unfavorable circumstances, opposing and wicked influences, overcome the saint who trusts in God ? NEVER. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Upon this rock thy soul may stand unscathed and unshaken, and the gates of hell shall not prevail. Have faith in God.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A CALL TO THE BACKSLIDDEN.

There are numerous admonitions in the Scriptures, to guard the people of God from departing or backsliding from him. "Take heed, brethren," says Paul, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." But multitudes failing to give heed to the timely warning, have forsaken "the fountain of living waters," and pierced their own souls through with many sorrows. Many backslide so imperceptibly and gradually, that they are hardly aware of any change, until they find themselves far away and involved in very serious departures from grace. Hence the appropriateness of the admonition,—"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

Mr. C. G. Finney says, "The term backslide means to go back from a point. In its widest signification when applied to religion, it may mean any class of persons who profess religion, whether they possess it or not. \* \* So it is equally customary to call them backsliders, whether they apostatize wholly from all religion, or change to another religion. In this sense it is often used under the Old Testament dispensation. God's people used to be spoken of as backsliders, when they went off to idolatry, as well as when they grew lax and unprincipled in the duties of religion." All therefore may be considered backsliders, in so far as they have gone back from a profession of their faith, (made upon a conviction of duty, believing at that time that they had experienced a change of heart,) and are living in neglect of the means of grace. There may be different *degrees* of backsliding, but its *nature* is always the same; a sin against which we are faithfully warned.

*What are some of the signs of backsliding?*

1. The zeal of the backslidden has grown cold ; the warm devotion they once felt is gone. The form of duties is kept up—family prayer, closet devotions, attendance on social and public worship—but the life and power of ardent piety are not felt in the performance of these duties. The ardor of their ‘first love’ has abated ; and in truth they have commenced to backslide.

2. When the relish for the more spiritual duties of religion is lost, we have another sign of backsliding. When a soul is brought into light and liberty, a taste and relish for spiritual things is begotten in the soul ; we love the things that we once hated. If this spiritual taste subsides, it is an omen of declension. There is not now that love for reading the Bible, that sweet delight in prayer, formerly enjoyed. Private devotions become short, and hurried, and less frequent. There is not that drawing nigh to God in prayer, that transforming of the soul into the Divine image, in the communings of the closet. Reader, is this thy state ? if so, know that thou art backslidden.

3. Absenting one’s self from the prayer and conference meeting, is a fearful sign of backsliding from God. Shall we forget both the vows of God upon us, and our covenant with the brethren ? The living Christian loves to meet at the house of prayer. The pious love God’s service, and say, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” If you do not love the assemblies of the saints, you are either a backslider or a hypocrite ; take which horn of the dilemma you will, your case is a sorrowful one, and demands that you bestir yourself, and take with you words of confession and repentance, and turn again unto the Lord.

4. If you have come to be shy of your pastor, or of the devoted brethren ; if jealousies and evil surmisings toward one and another are felt ; or if you love not the church in its ordinances ; remember it was not thus with you formerly. You loved spiritual converse ; you

loved the brethren ; your highest peace was found in those very things for which you have now but little relish. Alas ! how has the gold become dim ; and the most fine gold changed ! Those who are living in this state, are making work for repentance. As sure as they live, they are backsliders. What ! coolly greet the brethren ? What ! shun the society of the pious ? What ! avoid your pastor ? him, who was perhaps the instrument of your conversion ? him, who led you, then so happy, into the baptismal waters ? him, who led you so by the hand in your convert days, and has labored so ardently for your salvation ? If so, shall I tell you, kind reader, that you are sadly a wanderer from the fold, a backslider in deed and truth !

5. When Christians cannot bear a reproof which is administered in the spirit of kindness, there is a wrong state of the heart. Does admonition offend you ? Do you take it unkindly, when a brother tells you of a fault ? Have you felt that he *meant* to injure, instead of helping you ? Such feelings dwell only in a cold heart ; and nine cases out of ten may be regarded as an omen of spiritual declension. "Let the righteous smite me—it shall be as an excellent oil on my head"—is the language of true piety and spiritual devotion. If you cannot bear rebuke and reproof, know that you are wanting in the mind and temper of Christ.

6. A worldly, carnal mind, is ominous of a backslidden state. When the thoughts of professors are more upon the world, fashions, and dress, than on the Savior, be sure they have forsaken the Lord, to a sad extent. Do you feel more solicitous to prosper in the world than in spiritual things ; have more interest for worldly enterprises than love to promote Christ's cause ; I ask, where is your supreme love to God ?—where your seeking "first" the kingdom of heaven ? When brethren or sisters can join with the impenitent in sin and folly—when they cast off fear, and restrain prayer—when they can absent themselves from the circles of prayer, and find their pleasure in the vain amusements

of the ungodly—let them know, despite all professions to the contrary, that they are far from God by wicked works, and have need speedily to repent, lest the candlestick be removed from its place.

7. Again—if nominal professors are at ease in Zion, feeling but little for her interests; and are in no distress of soul on account of the wickedness of the wicked—it is a sign not to be mistaken, of their being in a cold backslidden state. Can you hear the name of God blasphemed, or see the holy Sabbath desecrated, or religion ridiculed, and you not feel heartily to pray that the “wickedness of the wicked should have an end?” Hear the Psalmist, “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” So every Christian feels who has a lively sense of eternal things. Or, have you no drawing out of soul in prayer to God for the up-building of the church? Hear again the language of fervent piety: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” Such is ever the language of all who are progressing in the path of salvation.

And now, dear reader, bound with myself and all men to the judgment! are you conscious, on an examination of this subject, that *you are a backslider!* I wish to make a solemn call and appeal to you. Whether backslidden in a greater or less degree, your case is alarming! One step in departure from your God but makes way for another; and you have reason to fear, and to turn without delay. We beseech you, do not venture one step further from the fold of Christ. You may be ready to say, “I know I do not enjoy my mind as I once did; but I do not think that I am very far backslidden, or that there is any danger of getting so far from God as many others have gone.” I doubt not but some of my readers may think just so; and so have thousands thought who have finally made shipwreck of faith. It is bad to be insensible of one’s true state and

danger. O, do not be high-minded, but fear. Your case in all degrees of backsliding, is alarming. This is the way the enemy leads souls to ruin! Carefully examine your true position. Do not yield to unbelief, the temptations of the devil, or the flatteries of the world. Break at once away from them all; resolve by Divine grace that you will return to the fold of Christ, and take your place in the church. Like the prodigal, go to your Father and confess; submit to the cross, and be willing to become a servant. Perhaps you will be tempted to believe that it will do no good; that you will never again enjoy religion as you have done; or that Christians will have no confidence in you. But put your trust in God; look to him penitently by faith and prayer. God waits to be gracious, to pardon you, and to restore to your uncomfited heart that peace and confidence you once enjoyed. He invites you to return and seek your injured Father's face.

Think, my dear friend, of the loss of true enjoyment you sustain by backsliding from God. Once his glory shone around your tabernacle, his peace and love filled your soul. You arose in the morning to sing his praise. All day long Jesus was your theme of meditation. How sweet your moments of prayer! Your soul drew near to God, and in child-like simplicity you unbosomed all your heart before the lovely Savior. Tears of penitence and gratitude fell upon his feet, and you could but exclaim, "He is the one altogether lovely and the chiefest among ten thousands." In the house of God, you sat in "heavenly places" in Christ; his banner over you was loye, and his fruit sweet to your taste. His gospel was precious—the Bible sweeter than honey and the honey-comb—and all Christ's commands pleasant.

● "What peaceful hours you then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!"

But to the backslidden, all this peace is gone—

"And now they feel an aching void,  
The world can never fill"

Again—consider the amount of guilt and condemnation which now harrass your poor soul. “No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk according to the spirit.” But guilt fills your cup. Often now you would shun the presence of devoted Christians, whom you once most highly esteemed. Why this? You are a backslider! And when you have been accosted as ‘brother’ before those impenitent persons who know your backslidings, shame and condemnation have filled your mind. On the one hand, you shun religious conversation, which was once your delight. On the other hand, you find no satisfaction in worldly amusements. If you join hands with the wicked, you feel guilty and condemned. And again, how gloomy are the hours you spend alone? Who but should pity the poor unhappy wanderer from God?

What grief do not backslidden professors bring upon the truly pious. Pastors and brethren had fondly indulged the hope that some who are now far away, would be shining lights in the world, and rich blessings in the church. But how have these hopes been blasted! Backslidden friends, when you first embraced the gospel, your pastor and the church were greatly comforted; your prayers and your joys were cheering to the people of God. But how have their hearts been grieved—their souls pained within them, while they have seen you halting. They have mourned while they are compelled to see your place in the conference room vacated, and your voices no longer heard in the circles of prayer. You have obliged those you once loved, to exclaim in reference to you, “O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughters of my people”! How have your backslidings wrung the heart of your minister who had baptized you; and of the church which received you into covenant love and watch-care? And with what solicitude do they yet pray for you, and wish your return?

Shall it all be in vain? O, be entreated to return without delay.

Think of the unhappy influence you are exerting while in a backslidden state. You are liable to lead others astray, at the same time that you are a stumbling block in the way of sinners. Your vows stand recorded to labor to build up the church; but how do these witness against you, while your wanderings are exerting a contrary influence! But farther, how do you strengthen the hands of the ungodly? They have rejoiced that those who once promised to be bright ornaments to Christianity, have fallen, and are now found among themselves, neglecters of the great salvation, and perhaps scoffers and errorists. Wanderers from God are tempted to resort to various expedients to lull conscience, and justify themselves in backslidings. Hence such as have gotten far away, will very naturally talk Universalism, or argue for some other damning error. Harrassed and perplexed, tried and tempted, yet unresolved to return to the Savior, they will take a miserable shelter under some refuge of lies. But friends, beware! While this is a sad relief to your own unhappy souls, it is a sad thing thus to strengthen sinners in the way to eternal death! No doubt there are impenitent sinners yet unreconciled to God, who would have been converted, but for the influence of backsliders! Reader, permit me to ask you solemnly, Has your influence prevented the salvation of one soul? Shall your influence reach down to hell? Awful question! Ponder it—ponder it.

Once more—Think of the good you might have done, if instead of backsliding, you had continued to maintain an humble walk with God. The most obscure Christian, if devoted, will be useful. You perhaps might have led some sinner to the foot of the cross, and that soul now have been happy in the Savior's redeeming love. You might have comforted the doubting disciple, supported the weak, encouraged the halting, cheered the afflicted, poured the oil of consolation into the troubled

breast. You might have been like an angel of mercy at the house of mourning ; and cheered the dying with your fervent prayers. Ay, to-day you might have been a pillar in the church, a useful fellow Christian in social meetings, an efficient laborer to spread the gospel of the blessed God in the world. All this is lost to God's cause by your sinful backslidings. Privileges have been wasted, talents unoccupied, precious time lost forever.

But God forbid that I should leave poor backsliders here ! I have not done, till I tell you God waits to receive you again to his love, if you will return. Consider, then, the voice of mercy that calls you. How affectionate and kind is the language mercy employs :— “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal all your backslidings. Turn, O backsliding daughter, saith the Lord ; for I am married unto you.” Shall mercy thus plead with you, and plead in vain ? Shall God himself invite, and his invitations be unheeded ? Shall he accompany his invitations with the most cheering promise, “I will heal all your backslidings,” and you still disregard them ? Shall such grace be refused ?

“Return, O wanderer, return,  
And seek a Father’s melting heart ;  
His pitying eyes thy grief discern,  
His hand shall heal thine inward smart.

Return, O wanderer, return ;  
Thy Savior bids thy spirit live ;  
Go to his bleeding side, and learn  
How freely Jesus can forgive.

Return, O wanderer, return,  
And wipe away the falling tear ;  
’Tis God who says, ‘No longer mourn ;  
’Tis Mercy’s voice invites thee near.’

Consider the dying love of the Savior. See him in the garden, sweating as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. See him falsely accused at Pilate’s bar, derided, mocked, buffeted, scourged. Behold him ascend Calvary, bearing his own cross. See him nailed to it, and extended between heaven and earth.

Look on him bleeding, groaning, dying ! Wanderers,  
look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn !

"Hearts of stone, relent, relent;  
Break, by Jesus' cross subdued!  
See his body, mangled, rent,  
Covered with a gore of blood !  
Sinful soul, what hast thou done ?  
Murdered God's eternal Son !—  
Yes, our sins have done the deed,  
Drove the nails that fixed him there;  
Crowned with thorns his sacred head ;  
Pierced him with a soldier's spear;  
Made his soul a sacrifice,  
For a sinful world he dies !—  
Will you let him die in vain ?  
Still to death pursue your Lord ?  
Open tear his wounds again ?  
Trample on his precious blood ?  
—No ! with all my sins I'll part ;  
Savior, take my broken heart."

And now, wanderers, backsliders, what will you do ? O, will you not come to the Savior, saying, "Jesus, take my broken heart" ? Reflect on the joys which await the faithful followers of the Lamb. What has God prepared for all those who love and wait for the appearing and kingdom of Christ ! Robes of righteousness, palms of victory, crowns of glory, mansions of rest, pleasures forevermore at His right hand. These are offered to you, if you will but return with all your heart. But if these move you not, think of the final end of the backslider ! Soon shall burst upon his astonished vision the gloomy realities of hell—the doom of apostate angels, and apostate men ! O, be persuaded to return to God *now, to-day* ! As you value the soul, as you prize eternal life, as you would shun the dwellings of eternal night, turn to God now ! Will you do it ? Return now to the church—to Christ your Savior—God will receive and save you.

## PART II.

### THE CHURCH—AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE CHURCH.

The term *church*, when taken in its broadest sense, means all who profess to be the followers of Christ, and walk, and worship him, according to the Scriptures. In this sense it is evidently used in Col. 1:19, 24. When used by the different writers of the Epistles, the term most frequently denotes a community of professed believers, who were so located as to meet together conveniently for the worship of God ;—a particular congregation. 1 Cor. 1:2 ; 1 Pet. 5:13 ; 3 John, 6. In Acts 7:38, it means the whole nation of the Jews. The word “ is generally derived from the Greek *kuriakon*, what belongs, or is appropriated, to the Lord (*Kurios*;) though some think it is from the German *kuren*, to elect, choose out, and so corresponding to the Greek *ekklesia*, from *ek*, out of, and *kaleo*, I call.” ENCYCLOPEDIA. The Greek word *ekklesia*, sometimes means an assembly whether religious or not; as in Acts 19:32, 39.

When did the visible church commence, may be an inquiry of some interest. Says M.. M. Smart in his

Biblical Doctrine :—“ From earliest times, there appear to have been those who offered sacrifices and called on the name of the Lord : evidently having taken upon themselves the title of the “ Sons of God,” considering themselves as his children by adoption, in distinction from the ungodly, who were children by creation only, and have forfeited this relation by apostacy. By this title they professed to be penitents and believers ; as children to love and serve God. The phraseology, *sons of God, his children, his people*, is ever used to denote the church. There appears, however, to have been no regularly organized, visible church, till the time of Abraham, when the Jewish church was established. Then it was furnished with a series of written revelations, and had new sacraments instituted. The church continues ever the same in its essential features. There have been changes in its organization ; for instance, at the close of the Jewish dispensation. Certain rites and ceremonies which were to be observed till the coming of Christ, were dispensed with when he came. He instituted baptism and the Lord’s supper, and gave other directions to his disciples.”

The first Christian church was formed at Jerusalem about ten days after the ascension of Jesus, and served as a model for other churches, which were soon formed by the apostles. Having finished their work at Jerusalem, they went forth to publish the glad news of salvation to the surrounding nations, and soon gave the gospel to a great part of the known world, gathering in the mean time a great number of churches. In the book of the Acts, frequent mention is made of the apostles preaching in one and another place where at the time was no church ; but soon we find in the Epistles letters addressed to a church in that place. And from the number thus planted and the deep solicitude felt by the apostles for their prosperity, it is concluded that this was an interesting part of their labors. 2 Cor. 11:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.

The different churches in the days of the apostles, were independent bodies ; no one church pretending to exercise jurisdiction over another. Neither was any *individual* to be considered as head over the churches. Ministers were directed to take the oversight of the flock, "not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

The churches thus planted were covenanted together, as appears from 2 Cor. 8:5 ; where it is said they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." When any number of Christians are embodied as a church, there is always some definite object in view, and principles on which the organization is to act ;—and these, if not written are implied. If there were no special object, why associate in a body ? When a church is organized, it is expected by those who unite in the organization, for instance, that in so far as it is practicable, all the members will attend conference and prayer meetings, and help to maintain the public worship of God. Now if there is no *written covenant* to this effect, this is implied—understood. In our opinion it is far preferable that churches have a *written covenant*. Then all will more readily understand it ; and those who unite would clearly understand what is to be expected of them by the church. "In the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles," says Smart, "there is frequent notice of the covenants of churches. Tertullian represents the church as united by "*an agreement in discipline*," "*a covenant of hope*." Justin Martyr represents them as "*agreeing in a resolution*" to serve God. Pliney, who was a heathen, after stating the time and manner of the ancient Christians. "*assembling together for worship, repeating a hymn to Christ as to a God,*" goes on to state that they were accustomed "*to bind themselves by a sacred obligation* not to commit wickedness, but on the contrary to abstain from thefts, robberies, and adul-

teries ; also, not to violate their promise or pledge." *A Christian church is, then, a body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who assemble for his worship, and maintain his ordinances.*

The officers of the church are, bishops and deacons. Phil. 1:1. The word *bishop* in the New Testament means *an overseer, superintendent, or inspector*, and is always synonymous with the word *Elder*, as may be seen by comparing Acts 20:17, with verse 28, where they are rendered *overseers*. The duty of the bishops or elders of the church is, to look after the spiritual interests of the church ; while the deacons are to attend to its temporal affairs, especially to the poor of the church.

*There are important reasons why there should be such an organization as churches, and why every true Christian should be united with a church.*

1. Men are social beings ; and it is a law of nature, in other phraseology, the law of God, for kindred minds, congenial spirits, to associate and mingle together. When Peter was miraculously delivered from the prison, he immediately "went to his own company," the church. Acts 12. The appeal is made to every enlightened Christian, if it is not with the church where they find kindred and congenial spirits ? Cannot all who have been born of the spirit say—

" There my best friends and kindred dwell,  
And there I long to be ?"

2. The mutual good of all parties requires it. Christians need to be reminded of duty, and to have their pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance ; —and surely there are no circumstances in which they can be placed so well adapted to secure this object, as in a Christian church. Mark the order of the primitive disciples : " And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." St. Paul directs—" Warn the unrighteous, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak." 1

Thess. 5:14. When believers thus labor and walk together, God is with them ; and thus mutually bearing each other's burdens, they so fulfill the law of Christ. We very-much need the faithful admonitions, sympathies, and prayers of each other, in all the path of the Divine life.

3. Church organization is essential, to enable God's people to sustain themselves in their religious privileges in a pecuniary point of view. Meeting houses are to be built ; and as no individual will usually assume the responsibility alone, there must be the united effort of the church or society. The gospel is to be sustained in the church ;—the minister or pastor must be supported ; and to accomplish this in the best way, the harmonious action of the church is required ;—and truly no consistent Christian would sooner wish that a minister should labor for his good in the gospel without compensation, than another man in another employment. There are also other responsibilities and expenses which church compact enables Christians to meet, in the best possible manner. Thus embodied they possess strength—strength to sustain themselves as a church, erect suitable places for worship, support the ministry, and attend to the *ordinances of the gospel*.

4. A very important reason for church organization is the facilities it affords for spreading the gospel of the Savior. The great commission is,—“ Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature—He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16. This command of Christ is still binding on the church—on every Christian. The question is, How shall this command be carried into effect ? Shall each one assume to preach, in order to obey the heavenly mandate ? Nay, not so. But a body of believers are to collect the means that each one can communicate, and with this means to send forth *one* of their number to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to be-

nighted pagans. In this way the whole world may have the gospel, and in no other. And this must be the result of the united efforts of the church. Are churches, then, to be demolished, and gospel order disregarded, as those practically argue who would stand aloof from membership in evangelical churches? Is it not rather, the most effectual preparation for spreading the glorious gospel, that all due attention be paid to permanent church building? The more permanent and thoroughly churches are organized and covenanted together, the more efficient will be their efforts and the greater their ability, to circulate the word of life and preach Christ crucified to the nations sitting in darkness.

5. Church organization must be sustained, in which believers are covenanted together *to maintain the wholesome discipline of the Scriptures*, and attend to the institutions of the gospel, or true religion will become extinct. Where there are churches walking in gospel order, members who do not adorn the gospel of God our Savior, are labored with, and if not reclaimed, excluded from the communion and fellowship of the church. In this way the world sees that the church of Christ does not fellowship the unfruitful works of darkness. From such discipline, instead of her glory's being eclipsed, she arises to shine as a light in the world. But if there be no well regulated church, any professor feels at liberty to live as he lists, there being no tribunal to call him to account for irregularities. Or if any embrace heretical opinions, upon the supposition of no church, there are none to convert him from the error of his way. As all are isolated and independent, no one is his brother's keeper, -or feels under obligation to restore the erring. How vastly better that all Christians, having first given themselves to God, then "give themselves to each other by the will of God," in solemn covenant to labor for preserving the unity of the spirit and bond of peace, by purity of doctrine and practice! God speaks to the church, that

organization which himself has instituted, when he commands "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject."

No man can adopt and carry out the rule of discipline, by which the people of God are to govern themselves in this matter, without church organization. Says the Savior, "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the CHURCH; but if he neglect to hear the CHURCH, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Matt. 18:15—17. Now suppose there are in the vicinity of a church which is walking according to this rule, a number of "come-outers" making great pretensions to an exalted piety, and calling loudly upon the surrounding Christians, "Come out of her, my people," as if to leave the church and go over to them, were to leave Babylon and get into liberty—suppose in the meanwhile one of their own number is found guilty of some flagrant trespass against his brother—what shall he do? The rule of duty is laid down by Christ. He commences discipline, but finds a difficulty at once. The transgressor refuses to make any satisfaction; he wishes to take one or two with him, and afterward tell it to the church. But no one is responsible because there is no compact or agreement to help each other, and there is *no church*. This gospel rule which Christ has given for discipline is null and void! Therefore if the church in a visible or organized form is destroyed, an important portion of the Scriptures is thereby rendered inapplicable to any class of men on earth.

6. The apostles, who were commissioned by their Lord to publish the gospel of peace among the nations; to develope more fully its nature and principles in their application; to adopt such measures for the permanent

establishment of Christianity and its diffusion through the world, as were most efficient to secure these objects —themselves organized churches. Of this fact, the most superficial reader of the New Testament cannot but be aware; and as they were specially commissioned by the great head of the church, it must be an irrefragible argument for church building to the end of time. So far were the apostles from giving any countenance to a lax, disorganizing practice, that they often organized small churches, sometimes consisting of a single household of believers. See Rom. 16:5. 1 Cor. 16:19. Gal. 4:15. Philemon, 2.

7. Both Jesus Christ and his apostles manifested a deep anxiety for the prosperity of the churches. When Paul had enumerated the afflictions through which he had passed in propagating the gospel, he mentions besides those things which were without that which devolved on him daily, "the care of all the churches." 2 Cor. 11:25—28. And our Lord himself by the beloved disciple John addressed in brief epistles the seven churches of Asia, approving what in them was right, and condemning what was wrong; thus evincing his faithfulness and love toward them. It is worthy of remark that, though the Savior found some occasion for censure in all of these churches, and some of them were very corrupt, (Rev. 2:14,20,) yet we do not once hear him say, "Come out of her, my people." On the contrary, he encouraged them to labor for the purity and peace of the church, presenting the promise of a "right to the tree of life," to all such as should be faithful until death.

8. It was considered by Christ and the apostles to be a punishment of a serious kind to be excluded from the church. Those who walked disorderly and would not adhere to the government of the church, were to be esteemed as a *publican* and a *heathen man*. And what could be a greater punishment, to the mind of a Jew or Christian? Relative to the case of the incestuous Corinthian, says Paul, "sufficient to such a man is this

punishment, which was afflicted of many: so that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow." Why this pungent sorrow? The church had proved itself clear from participating in his sins, by excluding him from its fellowship. And we are confident that any person who has a sense of the blessings of the gospel and the privileges of a church, would consider it sufficient cause of sorrow to be excluded and disowned by a church.

9. A standing in the church in primitive times, was considered the line of demarkation between saints and sinners. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:41, 47. Here it is seen, that such as were to be saved were added to the visible church. It was the visible mark that they were believers in Jesus; and unbelievers are spoken of as "without" the church; "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." 1 Cor. 5:12, 13. The church at Thessalonica also is exhorted to "walk honestly toward them that are without." Hence to join the church in those times was the sign of discipleship to Jesus Christ.

10. The greatest calamity that can befall any people, is to have the "candlestick removed out of its place"—to have a church removed or destroyed. Of all the groans that ever fell upon the ear of man, or pierced the heavens, none are so awful as the dying groans of an expiring church! Contemplate for a single moment, the church of Ephesus; and mark the gloom that gathers around its history after it had forsaken its "first love," and agreeably to the threatening that the candlestick should be removed out of its place unless they should repent. Planted by the apostle Paul, in that flourishing city, then the great em-

porium of Asia Minor ; nourished by the labors of Timothy and of John ;—the candlestick has been removed ! the once splendid city is a heap of stones and miserable mud cottages inhabited occasionally by a few Turks ; a place for goats and crows and partridges ; —the unrivaled pomp of its heathen worship is no longer remembered ; and Christianity, which was here nursed by apostles, and fostered by general councils, has long since fallen from its glory. Such the effect of the candlestick's being removed. The Epistle to the Ephesians is read with interest by Christians ; but where is the Church of Ephesus ? Very like to this, is the history of the rest of the seven churches of Asia ; and very like to it also the history of all those places where God removes the candlestick out of its place ! Let a church be removed, and confusion follows : Sabbath breaking, infidelity, and every moral and social evil will abound. But when a church prospers, walking in gospel order, sin is rebuked, and the means of grace enjoyed. Happy is the people that is in such a case ; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.

*That churches were to be perpetuated in distinct organizations to the end of time, is evident from the following considerations.*

1. The apostles planted churches, and watered them with their tears. "For out of much affliction," says Paul, "and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears ; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye should know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." They both gathered churches, and manifested the deepest interest for their continued prosperity. And every argument in favor of the organization of churches in the days of the apostles, is equally to the point of their organization now ; the objects for which churches were constituted then, remaining the same now, namely, the mutual good of the brethren and the spread of the gospel. These objects are still dear to the hearts of all consistent Christians ; and hence you will expect to see all such united to the

church, and lending a willing influence to accomplish these purposes.

2. There are ordinances instituted in the church, which were to be perpetuated till the end of time. "For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death until he come." Here is an institution for the *church*, and to be observed till Christ should make his second appearance in the clouds of heaven. Destroy the church, and of course you destroy the ordinances of the church.

3. The Christian ministry was instituted in the church, for the benefit of the churches. "And God hath set some *in the church*; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers—For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." 1 Cor. 12:28; and Eph. 4:11, 12. Again the promise respecting the ministry, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Here, again, is conclusive evidence that church organization was to continue through all time. All instructions of the Scriptures recognizing the mutual relations of pastor and people, are likewise based upon the perpetuity of the churches: "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God. Feed the flock of God, which is among you."

These considerations must be sufficient for the perpetuity of church organization; and from these as premises, believed to be incontrovertible, we conclude—1. That the organization of churches is the clearly revealed will of God, practiced by the apostles and sanctioned by Jesus Christ. 2. That it is for the best interests of Christianity and for the spread of the gospel, and to be continued till the end of the world. 3. And that those who are raising the cry, "Come out of her, my people," thus attempting to rend in pieces the churches, are at war with a Divine institution which has in view the best good of man.

Before closing this chapter, the author wishes to notice two objections not unfrequently made against uniting with the church. "There are divisions and difficulties in the churches." This objection is urged in justification of neglecting the duty and privilege of uniting with the church. We admit that there are sometimes divisions, and often some difficulties in churches. It was so in the days of the apostles. "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" 1 Cor. 3:2. And ungodly men might belong to the churches then: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 5:13. But did the inspired apostle warn believers against uniting with such a church? Did he say to the faithful, Come out from the church? Not at all. But the proper course is pointed out clearly in the word of God, namely, to exercise kind and faithful discipline, to put away the evil, and purify the church by restoring it to gospel order. Christianity is a perfect system; but men and even Christians, are imperfect. God's people are a tried people; and from the nature of things, though religion is perfect, there will be occasionally imperfections and trials in churches. But shall those who love God and the saints stand aloof from membership in the church of Christ, because there are trials in it? Let it never be said.

The second objection is this—"The churches at the present time are all cold and backslidden." And this is gravely urged as a reason for not uniting with them. That churches often become cold and backslidden, is a fact too obvious to be denied. But is this a sufficient reason for not joining a church; or for wishing to leave, if you are already a member? I answer, No! Look at the state of the Laodicean church: "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth; because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of

nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. 3: 16, 17. But did Christ by the Revelator warn believers against uniting with such a church ? Not a word of such warning. The church needed help ; there were living Christians in it ; they needed reformation. And obviously it were the duty of the living members of that church to remain in it, and labor to reform and purify, and quicken it ; and as palpably the duty of converts to join it, and unite their influence to build up the cause of the gospel. That was the time when the church needed the help of all the faithful. It is especially when the ways of Zion mourn, that all Christians should put forth *united* effort to build her waste places. Now, then, Mr. objector, put away your excuses, put your neck beneath the yoke of Christ, and labor heartily in the church, as the true yoke-fellow of the saints and faithful soldier of the cross.

Christian reader, have you been tempted to leave the church, that you may get free of difficulty and enjoy liberty? Beware of such a snare, I entreat you. It is a trap of the enemy ; the snare that has proved fatal to thousands ! Rely upon it, that when a person assumes the position to say, "If the brethren do not do this or that, I will leave the church"—he occupies a fearful position. Once get above gospel discipline, and wish for more liberty than is enjoyed in the church, and almost inevitably the next step in your pathway will be to make total shipwreck of your faith. Look upon those who have trodden this dangerous path ; and where are they ? How instructive and full of warning is the history of hundreds of individuals, within the last few years ! Where are they ? Gone ! —they have glided down the current of some false doctrine, some fanatical and infidel theory, until they have dashed against the rocks of outright infidelity, and are sunk to rise no more. O then, cleave steadfastly to the church. Planted by God for the edification

of believers and the conversion of the impenitent, if you cannot enjoy religion in the church, you cannot out of it. Worship in the church and seek its peace ;— live in it, and die in it.

## CHAPTER II.

• DUTY OF CHURCH MEMBERS TO LOVE ONE  
ANOTHER.

It has pleased the adorable Jesus to make brotherly love one of the cardinal virtues of his people, the great law by which they are to regulate their conduct toward each other. "These things I command you, THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER." John 15:17. He has not only commanded us to love one another, but has enjoined it upon us to love one another *as* He has loved us. "This is my commandment that ye love one another, *as* I have loved you." John 15:12. Let us then contemplate His love toward us. *His* was real; not in profession or word only, but such as moved his holy soul to open a door of hope for the guilty. *His* was disinterested. While we were helpless, and in our guilt and blood, he loved us and gave himself for us. *His* was fruitful; unto tears, and agony, and blood, and death. *His* was forbearing, long-suffering, and forgiving. *His* was unchangeable; though we err, he bears long with us, and is always gracious and abundant in mercy. Therefore, if we love one another *as* He has loved us—1. We shall love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. 2. We shall love the brethren without any regard to our own advantage. 3. Should do all in our power to comfort and establish each other. 4. Should be disposed to overlook those little infirmities that are common to all Christians. 5. Should be willing to forgive. 6. Should love our brethren as the objects of the Divine favor, the purchase of the Redeemer's blood. These are items deserving of mature consideration by all church members.

Being commanded to "let brotherly love continue," and to "love one another with a pure heart fervently;" and this being the very essence of experimental relig-

ion, the absence of which in any church renders it a cold and lifeless body, whatever other gifts and graces it may possess, we think that all Christians must see the vital importance of obedience to this commandment. It is the cement, which knits the hearts of the pious together. How conspicuously did this love manifest itself among the converts at Jerusalem? They had come together as strangers from sixteen different provinces, men of various languages; yet when redeemed by the blood of Jesus, they were no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Jewish saints and of the household of God. They were now willing to bring all their worldly treasures and lay them at the apostles' feet, all sharing a common lot with the brethren. What proofs of brotherly love in the acts of the apostles and primitive Christians! Often were the enemies of the cross constrained to pronounce on them the eulogium, "See how these Christians love one another!" the greatest praise that can be conferred on the followers of Jesus Christ. How much to be lamented that the church, in losing so much of her love, has lost so much of her loveliness?

What are the reasons for mutual love in the Christian church, and the developments of this principle among brethren? or what does the commandment of brotherly love require?

1. It has been already seen that Christians should highly esteem each other, as the subjects of the redeeming grace and dying love of their common Savior. Says that excellent writer, J. A. James—"Complacency is the very essence of love; and the ground of all proper complacency in the saints, is their relation and likeness to God. We should feel peculiar delight in each other as fellow heirs of the grace of God; partakers of like precious faith, and joint sharers of the common salvation. We must be dear to each other as the objects of the Father's mercy, of the Son's dying grace, and of the Spirit's sanctifying influence." It

is not the love arising from consanguinity, but love kindled from beholding the image of our Divine Master in a fellow disciple. As the Christian looks upon the followers of the Lamb, he feels that they are the salt of the earth, the beloved of the Lord; and he loves them for Jesus' sake. For this reason, he should love to converse with them, pray with them, associate with them, worship with them. We may see many things lovely and of good report in our fellow Christians, such as kindness, benevolence, generosity! but our love should "rest in them" as God's love does, chiefly on the ground of their relationship to Christ.

2. Love will lead us to sympathize with our brethren when in trouble; this is a world of trouble; and Christians will often need the sympathy of one another. Hence Paul enjoins it upon the Galatian converts, to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Chap. 6:2. When we see our brethren under trials, we should feel a deep solicitude for them. A time of trial is a time of temptation:—it was when Jesus was hungry, that he was tempted of the devil to make bread of the stones. Often a kind word from a fellow Christian might change the countenance of a brother, who had long travelled in gloom, to its wonted cheerfulness; while a cold and distant carriage toward him at such a time, is the cause of increased sorrow. From whatever cause the trial may have come, if it be known that our brother is in trouble, it is the part of brotherly love to offer our consolation and aid. Indifference to our brother when pressed with grief and sorrows, is criminal. We should listen to his tale of woes, mingle our tears with his, and let him see that his trials have not only reached our ears, but touched our heart. Let us comfort him with our counsels, and encourage him with the precious promises of the gospel. Sympathy is one of the dearest, easiest, and most effectual expressions of brotherly love; and at such sounds

of mercy and acts of kindness, the burdened heart would often be relieved and filled with hope.

3. The proper exercise of Christian love will lead the pious to visit their brethren in the day of sickness and personal afflictions. This point has been briefly alluded to before, when we quoted the Savior's remarkable words, "*I was sick, and ye visited me.*" But the importance of this duty among church members, and growing so directly as it does out of the exercise of brotherly love, demands that it should be here treated more fully. That this duty may be more deeply impressed on the heart, let us suppose a few cases calling for its performance. A dear brother, whose heart is united to the people of God by the purest principles of Christian love, is thrown upon a sick bed where wearisome days and tedious nights are appointed unto him. He is shut out from the sanctuary, and debarred those sweet privileges of mingling in worship with the brethren. Weeks and months pass, and he has seen but few Christians, nor heard much of religious conversation. Does he forget his brethren? Nay; for long hours has he lain, wishing that such a brother, and such a dear disciple, would enter his sick chamber. And ought they not? Again—A kind and affectionate sister, who had first given herself to God and then to the church by the will of God, and who had always felt that she could never do too much for Christ, is confined to a sick room away by herself in a remote neighborhood of the parish. Weeks of lingering sickness slowly pass away, and no member of her beloved church, if possibly you except her pastor, has for once crossed the threshold of her sick chamber. She justly soliloquizes thus:—"Here I have been confined to my bed for weeks—parched with fever—my mind so affected and nerves so weak, as scarcely to be able to collect my thoughts for prayer. O, if sister B. or sister H. would only come and see me, how should I enjoy their sweet, pious conversation! We have ta-

ken sweet satisfaction together at the house of God. Is it possible that they forget me now ? Or brother D., if I could hear him pray now by my bedside as I have heard him, how it would comfort my heart in this long season of suffering and affliction ! But now, how I am tempted ! Do they indeed regard me as a sister in Christ ? If so, why do they forget me now ?"—I ask, is not this Scripture too much lost sight of—" I was sick, and ye visited me ?" Or again you may suppose, what is matter of fact in many churches, that there are aged Christians upon whom the infirmities of many years press so heavily that they cannot go abroad, whose active years have been fondly devoted to the interests of Zion. Are these in their loneliness visited, as they ought to be, by their younger brethren. In all these cases, and others equally important, a proper exercise of brotherly love would lead brethren and sisters in the church, as well as pastors, to visit those in affliction, and labor to administer to them the consolations of the glorious gospel. Families mourning for the loss of friends need also the sympathy of Christian kindness.

" There have been ages of Christianity," so historians tell us, " in which brotherly love prevailed amongst Christians to such a degree that, fearless of the infection diffused by the most malignant and contagious disorders, they have ventured to the bedside of their brethren expiring in the last stages of the plague, to administer the consolations of a hope full of immortality. This was love ; love stronger than death, and which many waters could not quench. It was, no doubt, imprudent, but it was heroic, and circulated far and wide the praises of that dear name which was the secret of the wonder." But times change ; and how many are there now bearing the Christian name who scarcely ever yet paid one visit to the bedside of a suffering brother ! Shame and disgrace upon such professors !! Let them not expect to hear the Savior say, " I was sick, and ye visited me." Visits to the sick

should be of a purely religious character. Let the time be spent in prayer, singing, reading some devotional book, or encouraging pious conversation. It is often a duty to administer to the temporal wants of the sick, especially if they are of poor families. We would hope that this article will not be slightly passed over by any Christian reader; but that especially older members of the church will be often found in the room of sickness and suffering.

4. Brotherly love will induce church members to pray much for each other. Those who are accustomed to pray, are usually willing to pray *with* each other; but it is to be feared there is not so much praying *for* each other, as there should be. The closet affords a fine opportunity for this brotherly duty. Secret prayer is by no means to terminate on self; but there we may spread out before our Savior the case of our brethren. How it would increase mutual love, should we faithfully pray for our brethren when we supplicate for ourselves! Often, too, at the family altar are Christians to pray for those with whom they are in covenant and membership.

5. The command to love one another *as Christ has loved us*, will cover the duty of rendering pecuniary aid to the poor in the church. God has made it the duty of his people to distribute to the necessities of the saints. How forcible is the interrogation of John, “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, *how dwelleth the love of God in him?*” 1 John 3:15. Are not all pretensions of love absurd, unless we are willing to relieve the wants of the object beloved? It must be a singular affection that is destitute of mercy. Said the Savior, “The poor, ye have always with you.” Those in abject poverty without the means to help themselves, should be assisted; and wherever the adage is practicable, it is, doubtless true, that the best assistance a man can have is ‘*he means to help himself.*’ But “if any man will not

work, neither shall he eat :" the slothful prove themselves unworthy of charity. Those churches do well which have a fund for assisting the sick and distressed when they are poor. The fact that the laws of our country make provision for the poor, by no means frees churches from assisting the poor belonging to their own communion.

6. Church members should exercise forbearance toward one another. This is the legitimate offspring of Christian love : " Forbearing one another in love." Eph. 4:2. In all churches we are to expect variety of temperaments, tastes, and opinions. These will manifest themselves in the life and conduct. Some there are who will be inclined to a complaining spirit ; others will exhibit an abruptness of manner ; some will appear too forward and talkative ; others too diffident and backward. To some, at times, these traits will seem so unchristian as to endanger an alienation of feeling toward such. Now the work of brotherly love is, to overlook such unlovely traits in our fellow Christians, and to maintain the gushing warmth of pious fellowship and kind courtesy toward them still. The strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak. Those possessing greater talents and attainments are not to despise the ignorant, but in meekness instruct them, and, so far as they can, correct their errors. Often the uneducated and unpolished Christian is more deeply pious, than those who have enjoyed greater privileges and possess more true refinement. If any exhibit now and then an unlovely trait or have some ways that do not come up to our tastes, we are to love those brethren in spite of such petty faults not antagonist to true piety, and endeavor to do them good. Says a writer ; " If you had the picture of a valued friend, would you withdraw from it your affection and throw it away, because there was a spot upon the canvass, which in some degree disfigured the painting ? No : you would say, it is the likeness of my friend still, and I love it notwithstanding its imperfection. The believer is a pic-

ture of your best friend ; and will you discard him, neglect him, because there is a speck upon the painting?"

7. Love will lead church members to build up each other in faith and holiness. It was a murderer, whose hands were dripping with the blood of a slain brother, that asked, " Am I my brother's keeper?"—A thought that can never harmonize with the spirit of brotherly love. God has made it our duty to do good to all men, especially to the household of faith. Gal. 6:10. This is one of the prime reasons why Christians are brought into church fellowship, that they may *keep each other*. They are to reprove, admonish, encourage each other, as opportunities are afforded. They are forbidden by the law of Christ to watch for occasions against their brethren, or to be busy bodies in other men's matters ; but are to exhort one another daily, and so much the more as they see the day approaching. Israel is commanded thus : " Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." Lev. 19:17. And Christ's gospel directs Christians, " Warn the unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient to all men." This command is given all church members, not to ministers specially. If any did err from the truth and become remiss in duty, those who were spiritual were to " restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." How is this precept overlooked !

Probably no one duty is more neglected in the churches than this. Many a backslider would have been prevented from wandering far from the Lord, had not the Cain-like disposition of ' am I my brother's keeper' been too prevalent in the church. O that it were banished from our Zion ! On observing the first derelictions of a brother, should those who are spiritual in the church seek him out, admonish and encourage him, would not a soul be saved from death, and the precious cause of God from reproach ? Though in some cases it may be

a self-denying and trying duty, yet love of the brother will lead us to it. See to it, Christian reader, that you do not wantonly or through indifference, neglect what is an important duty and positive command.

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## CHAPTER III.

## ON PROMOTING THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.

To enlarge on the importance and desirableness of peace in the church, appears to the author not necessary. Peace is an essential condition to the prosperity of any community. God teaches its importance to the church of Christ, in thoughts that breathe and words that burn : "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Be of one mind; live in peace. Follow after the things that make for peace."

1. To insure and preserve peace in all the household of faith, church members must be subject to one another in humility. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." 1 Pet. 5: 5. From this scripture we learn that there should be mutual submission on the part of the members in every church. This does not require that some should yield up their opinions to others, so as to have no mind or sentiment of their own; nor does it imply that some are to set up their views as the standard according to which others' opinions are to be formed; but a mutual yielding to each other, in all those things that concern the peace of the church. This should be done, not only to superiors, but to our equals, and to inferiors, if indeed such distinctions be ever allowable in that fraternity where all are brethren. No member should ever be determined to *have his own way*; but after submitting his opinion, cordially yield to the united wisdom of the church, so far as he can without violence to moral principle. That spirit which boisterously exclaims, "I have as good right to my opinions as any one, and I will not give them up"—is sadly destructive to the union and peace of churches. Humility and the meek and quiet spirit which the Bible enjoins, will lead the member to say—"I have an opinion which I am

willing to express, and should my brethren differ from me, I will cheerfully submit the subject to the superior wisdom of the body." We ought always to feel that it is possible others may see as clearly as ourselves.

"The democratic principle in our system of church government should not be stretched too far. Liberty, fraternity, and equality, are words which both in church and state have often become the signals in the mouths of some, for the lawless invasion of the rights of others. It has been strangely forgotten, that no man in social life has a right to please only himself; his will is, or ought to be, the good of the whole. And that individual violates at once the social compact, whether in ecclesiastical or civil society, who pertinaciously and selfishly exclaims, "I *will* have *my way*." Such a declaration constitutes him a rebel against society."<sup>\*</sup>

Is it not to be lamented that much of this 'rebellion' is to be found, not only in the world, but in the Christian church; and not unfrequently under a pretence of zeal for the glory of God and the good of Zion. Let church members imbibe the spirit of the apostolic admonitions, and it would allay all factious difficulties: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. 2:3. "In honor preferring one another." Rom. 12:10. Where this spirit dwells, there is peace and harmony—but in its absence, there will be confusion and anarchy.

2. To preserve peace in the church, its members must be exceedingly careful *not to give offence*. There are some people who seem to be entirely indifferent to the feelings of others. Rude, dogmatical, rash, they say or do whatever suits their own fancy, without the least apparent regard to consequences. It is all alike with such, whether they please or displease—whether untimed remarks kill or cure. But O, how unlike is this to the temper and conduct of the blessed Jesus!

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\* John Angell James.

What meekness, what kindness in his discourses, who would not break the bruised reed. Such untoward professors will find nothing in the Savior that shall justify an indifference to the feelings of other men; nor in the deportment of the apostles. Says Paul, " If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend;" and Peter exhorts, " Be courteous." And verily Christian courtesy should be studied more by not a few professors. Make it a fixed point never to give offence or cause pain to any of Christ's disciples, of your own or another communion. Be " slow to speak," and " judge nothing before the time." Weigh your words before you utter them; scan your actions before you perform them. Let your brother's peace be as sacred to you as your own. Do not forget that you are in a crowded world; and an unguarded word, or an injudicious act, may do incalculable injury.

3. Church members should be careful not to receive an offence. Very serious difficulties often arise from the inconsiderate conduct to which I have just alluded; and they are perpetuated and increased, because they are entertained and circulated, when they should have been rejected. There are some who are excited by the most trivial circumstance, whether it be real or imaginary. A word, a single hint, respecting some body or something, and it sets them all a-toreh, as a candle-blaze would a hank of tow. We entreat such, should they chance to read our humble pages, to spare their fire-brands, arrows, and death"—spare the quiet of the churches—and think of the promise pronounced on *peace-makers*. But to our point—what was designed to be said is, that church members should be slow to take offence. Be sure first that some offence was really *intended*;—and if you exercise that charity which 'never faileth,' which 'is not easily provoked,' and which 'thinketh no evil,' you may learn that no offence was intended. Wait patiently, talk over the matter candidly, and you will find many things done through

mistake which have the appearance of design. Every Christian should deliberately make up his mind by the grace of God not to be offended, while passing through the world in which "it is impossible but offences will come." Be always disposed to attribute a good motive to the conduct of all, until a bad one is proved to be such. If such a principle was always acted on, offences would seldom come. There are many things unimportant in their nature, that it were better to let pass entirely unnoticed; and those deserving of notice will usually be easily settled, when both parties come to a fair understanding of each other.

4. It will tend to the peace of the church, when Christians learn to bear reproof with meekness. It is to be regretted that so few really know how to administer reproof; and still more to be lamented that so few know how to receive it. The pious David could say, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Ps. 141:5. How few can adopt this language with sincerity! How is the pride of many wounded, and with what mortification and resentment are they filled, when reproved for their faults. If we have so far departed from the path of Christian rectitude as to merit reproof, we ought to bear it with meekness. And should it not be administered with all the tenderness and wisdom which might seem desirable, prize the manly courage and faithfulness of your brother who seeks to correct you of a fault. The Scriptures charge us against slighting the reproofs of friends. "He that despiseth reproof sinneth—He that hateth reproof is brutish." Suffer rebuke, and never retort upon him who seeks to do you good. It were dishonorable, mean, unchristian.

5. As you love the peace of Zion, *watch against and utterly repress a tattling disposition.* Nothing tends more to destroy concord and harmony in churches than this. There are some in the churches now, so akin to the Athenians, that their ears and lips are always open

to hear or tell some new thing. Will not such as are busy bodies in other men's matters, be quite as likely to proclaim their *faults* as their *virtues*? Ay! Do not some take more delight in talking of other's bad, than good qualities? There is truth as well as poetry in these lines:—

"There is a lust in man, no charm can tame,  
Of loudly publishing his neighbor's shame;  
On eagle's wings immortal scandals fly,  
While virtuous actions are but born to die."

Mr. Pollok's vivid description of the slanderer and his work, has been previously given in the First Part. But let us look a moment farther, how this work goes on. There are usually three parties;—the tattler—the person who is weak enough to listen to him—and the individual slandered, who frequently allows himself to become a party in the end. Now, on the first item, every church member should make it his rule to speak evil of *no man*. This rule, possessing, as it does, the authority of the Divine sanction, should be to him like the laws of the Medes and Persians, unalterable. Never originate an evil report, even by simply giving an opinion, nor by repeating the gossip of others. When the tale-bearer would thrust his story upon you, turn from him; or if in some other way it reaches you, let it die in silence. Much like to very tattling, and a second item in this business, is that disposition which will allow any one to listen to an evil report with complacency. Christians ought never to appear pleased with the tales of a backbiter; but rather frown upon him, and charge home on him the guilt of slandering an absent brother. If one seems to credit his report, he is encouraged to go on in the work of defamation; and if he get your smiles for his gossip, he is tolerably well compensated.

The spirit of slander is sometimes qualified by speaking in favor of certain persons, in the presence of those who will at once pour forth a torrent of abuse at the bare mention of such names, especially when as-

sociated with the voice of praise. But what vile hypocrisy! praising a man with the design of calling forth the slanderous vociferations of an enemy. Discourage forever the low hollow-hearted meanness of tattling under the guise of lamenting the faults of brethren. Says Mr. James—"Many who would be afraid or ashamed to mention the faults of a brother in the way of direct affirmation or report, easily find, or attempt to find, a disguise for their backbiting dispositions in *affected lamentations*. 'What a pity it is,' they exclaim, 'that brother B. should have behaved so ill. Poor man, I am sorry that he should have committed himself. The petulance of his temper is exceedingly to be regretted. He does not much honor to religion.' 'And then,' replies a second, 'How sorry I am to hear this report of sister C. How the world will talk, and the cause of Christ suffer by such unwarrantable things in the conduct of a professor. It will not be a secret long, or I would not mention it.' 'Oh,' says a third, 'I have heard whispers of the same kind in times past. I have long suspected it, and mentioned it some months ago to a friend or two. I thought she was not the person she appeared to be. I am very sorry for her, and for the cause of Christ. I have long had my suspicions, and now they are all confirmed. I shall tell the friends to whom I expressed my fears what I have now heard.'—In this way is a tattling disposition indulged in the circles of even good people, under the guise of lamentation for the sins of others. 'Odious and disgusting,' would an honest Christian exclaim with hallowed indignation, 'which of you, if you really lamented the fact, would report it? which of you have gone to the erring individual, inquired into the truth of the matter, and, finding it true, has mildly expostulated? Let your lamentations be poured out before God and the offender, but to none else.'

"Others, again, indulge in this disposition by *running about to inquire* into the truth of a report which they say has reached them, *respecting a brother*. 'Have

you heard any thing of brother H. lately?' they ask with a significant look. 'No,' replies the person. 'Then I suppose it is not true.' 'Why, what have you heard? Nothing, I hope, affecting his moral character.' 'Not *very* materially, but I hope it is all false.' The tattler cannot go, however, without letting out the secret, and then sets off to inquire of another and another. Mischief making creature! Why had he not gone, as it was his obvious duty, to the individual who was the subject of the report, and inquired of him the truth of it? Ay, then the story would have been contradicted at once, and the pleasure of telling it would have been ended. There are cases in which a modest disclosure of the failings of others *is necessary*. Such, for example, as when a church is likely to be deceived in the character of an individual, whom it is about to admit to communion; that is, membership. In such instances, the person who is aware of the imposition that is likely to be practiced, should go directly to the pastor, and make him acquainted with the fact; instead of which some persons whisper their suspicions to any, and to many, *except* the pastor. It is perfectly lawful also to prevent any brother from being betrayed into a ruinous consequence in pecuniary matters, by informing him of the character of the individual by whom he is about to be deceived. Silence in such a case, would be an obvious injury."

To the sentiment of the above extracts, the author adds his most cordial assent. It may sometimes be one's duty to speak injurious truth of a brother, in order to secure the ends of justice. He who conceals a crime committed against the church, as well as against civil society, renders himself a party to the offence. In such a case we are bound to speak, that the offender may be brought to justice. What is required of us in all such cases is, that we assert what *we know* to be *fact*, and no more, and this for the purpose specified. Whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

By Church Discipline, we mean only that watch and care which church members should have for each other, and the course of labor to be pursued toward transgressors. As has been shown in a foregoing chapter, the members of a church are covenanted together to walk according to the Scriptures. A departure from this renders them liable to the discipline of the church.

In every community there must be authority *somewhere* invested, to carry the laws and regulations of that community into effect. In the church, this power is in the body—*the majority of the church*. To this effect is the instruction of the apostle—“ Yea, all of you, be subject one to another.” 1 Pet. 5:5. “ Sufficient to such a man is the punishment, which was inflicted *of many*.” And says Jesus, “ If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” The church then is the highest ecclesiastical tribunal, for the disciplining of its members, of which the New Testament speaks. According to Free-will Baptist usages, an aggrieved part of the church may appeal to a Quarterly Meeting for counsel, a Q. M. to a Yearly Meeting, and a Y. M. to the General Conference. But after all, it is only an appeal for counsel; and *in all cases of disciplining members*, the labor must *begin and end in the church*. See Treatise, article Church.

Good discipline is to a church what order is to a family; or the maintaining of government, and the application of the laws, to the prosperity of a nation. Its object should never be to serve any party interest, or coerce the judgment or conscience of men, but to secure the purity of the church, the honor of religion, the good of the offender, and the glory of God. Says an author, “ It is a matter of vast importance, that the

church should not only be well informed, but act with purity of intention and unity of design. That is, the laws of Christ for the government of his church, should be studied, understood, carefully and inflexibly adhered to, and in every respect carried into effect, according to their true spirit and meaning." We are not however to expect perfect harmony in our views and practice ; nor is every deviation to be made a subject of labor. A careful perusal of the fourteenth chapter of Romans will satisfy every candid mind of this, and show what are to be considered as subjects of forbearance ; such things as do not contravene the essence of Christ's kingdom, the essential principles of which are 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

As it respects the method of treatment which is to be pursued in church discipline, the rule that Christ has given is plain, and nothing is left ambiguous or equivocal. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother ; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Matt. 18:15—17. Here all is plain. "If thy brother trespass against thee." By *trespass*, we are not to understand any encroachment upon our civil rights, as such ; upon this Jesus did not legislate. The word 'trespass' simply relates to the relation we sustain as church members ; whatever violates the covenant engagements Christians have entered into, or counteracts the design of that compact, is, in the language of our Savior, a trespass. I suppose that any church member has, or should have, a deep interest for the peace, unity, prosperity, and purity of the church. On any other supposition, the original design of church organization, such as mutual edification of its members, sustaining the gospel, or exerting a healthful moral in-

fluence upon the world, could not be realized. The meaning then is, If thy brother wantonly violates his Christian obligations—casts off the vows which he has taken upon him, “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” How kind an object, the attempt to gain an erring brother! Now is the time for the exercise of patience, wisdom, and humility. Remember it was in connection with this instruction and these efforts to reclaim an erring brother, that Jesus said, “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Then go as his word directs : “ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Gal. 6:1. If you neglect this duty, you neglect the law of God. If instead of first mentioning the fault to the offender himself, you whisper it out to a third person, you become guilty of an offence, and subject yourself to a similar process of church labor.

Should this measure fail to restore an offending brother, the succeeding steps in this law of Christ are equally plain, and conciliatory. The rule should therefore be strictly adhered to. “ But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.” This is the second step in prosecuting a labor in the church. The “one or two” to be taken should be men of sound minds and deep piety, who will act as *mediators*, not as partizans. They are to go not merely as spectators or witnesses, but to labor to obtain a speedy and happy reconciliation. Let them go impressed with this saying of Christ, “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.” In their tongues should be “the law of kindness,” and every word should be “seasoned with grace.” They are not to go as accusers, but to inquire into the truthfulness of the report or allegation. Should the offender appear obstinate, let those brethren

laboring to restore him not assume any lofty airs or use threats to extort confession, but make in humility such appeals as arise from hearts deeply imbued with the Holy Spirit, and mellowed into tenderness by the love of God. If in the first or second interview, they so far gain the brother as to produce in him any relentings of heart, let them be encouraged to continue their labors in love, and patiently hope for the happiest results. Let the warm kindness of all their endeavors convince the brother that they wish not to wound his feelings, but to *convince* him of his wrong, manifesting a most cheerful willingness to *forgive*, and restore him into the sweet fellowship of brotherly charity. You will not be successful in winning an erring brother, unless you remember to approach him in the spirit of meekness.

Should both the first and second steps in the labor prove unsuccessful, we are not yet to suspend our efforts to gain our brother, but proceed farther, as the Divine Rule directs : " And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." It now becomes the duty of the CHURCH to act on the case collectively. For this purpose, the meeting and the object of the meeting should be properly notified, and the offender cited to attend. When the church is assembled, the throne of grace should be fervently addressed, and grace and wisdom sought of God to subdue every heart, to guide every tongue, and direct all its action. The aggrieved brother, or some officer of the church, should lay the case open before the brethren present ; and when the case is fairly stated, any brother who is disposed, may freely speak his mind, and propose such measures as he may judge agreeable to the word of God and best calculated to secure the peace and prosperity of the church, carefully avoiding any remark or insinuation which will tend to stir up strife. Christians never need more grace, or to have their hearts more under the influence of meekness and true charity, than at such times. It must be kept in mind, that there are now two sides, two parties. Whoever may have been the

first aggressor, it is not often that a long and complicated trial exists, without both parties being to blame, more or less. The aggrieved party, though he may have intended to guard carefully against every wrong feeling and action, may possibly have so far erred as to require some concessions on his part. If this be the case, and he should first commence the work, according to the injunction, "Confess your faults one to another"—it will often be the means of the other party's confessing his greater offence. The individual professing to be a Christian, who is unwilling to confess his faults when his conduct has been such as to demand it, possesses a radical defect of true Christian character. It will not be strange, however, if in the process of exercising the necessary church discipline, members be sometimes found too proud or wilful to make the least confession, or any explanation condemnatory of their conduct;—that some be found, who with an air of indifference to the feelings of the brethren, or their own welfare, shall exclaim, "Let the church do as it pleases; if you shut me out of the church you cannot shut me out of heaven;—I can live as well out of the church as I can in it." Mistaken soul! he should know that such a *spirit* may have shut thousands out of the kingdom of heaven; and albeit his indifference to the decision of the church, he should remember and ponder well the fearful words of Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth is bound in heaven." Words that have meaning in them.

If all effort on the part of the church proves unavailing, and the offender is unyielding, having had a fair scriptural trial, it becomes the solemn duty of the church to withdraw fellowship from him. In doing this, it is the duty of every member of the church present to act—to vote.\* It is desirable in all cases of this nature especially, to obtain a unanimous vote; but if

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\* "Females act in receiving and excluding members; but in this, and in all other things relating to church government, it is expected that they will be in subjection to their brethren."—*Treatise.*

it cannot be, the majority should rule, and the minority quietly submit to their decision. When a member is excluded, the Clerk should keep a record of the charges preferred and proved against him, and the reason or reasons why he has been excluded, that it may be known whether in future time he shall have removed his wrongs. While it will be necessary from time to time, in the exercise of a faithful gospel discipline, that churches should exclude some of its members, it should always be regarded as a solemn act, and never be too hastily done.

But should proper confession be made, we are bound to forgive the offending brother. If thy brother come to thee saying, "I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Luke 17:3. From the moment that penitence is seen in an offending, but now penitent brother, every unkind feeling toward him should be allayed. In what an awful position does Jesus hold such as do not forgive their brethren. "If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." How can a professed Christian, in whose heart dwells the spirit of unrelenting revenge, repeat the Lord's prayer? "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Would it not be to pray for perdition rather than for salvation? How does he forgive? By revenge! How forcible is the exhortation of the apostle: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption: Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be kind one toward another, and tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." Eph. 4:30—32. Such motives to forgiveness should move the hardest heart. Who that has tasted the sweets of the pardoning mercy of God, that cannot forgive a penitent brother, though he may have erred exceedingly? If such an one there be, let him go gazing upon the cross! see that bleeding sacrifice! hear his dying groans! see those tears and blood, flowing to

procure pardon ! pardon for him ! Here let him linger, until he can say in respect to his erring brother, Lord, I forgive ! An implacable Christian ! it is a contradiction of terms. "Bigots there may be, and have been, of all denominations ; but an implacable, irreconcileable, unforgiving Christian, is of the same figure of speech, as a godly adulterer, a religious drunkard, a devout murderer."

Church difficulties should never be considered as "settled," until there has been such explanations given, and such concessions made and received, as shall restore *love*, peace, and confidence between the parties. A decision of church may be far from healing the difficulties ; it is a sort of legal settlement, but does not necessarily restore the genuine feelings of kindness and good will. The love of God abundantly shed abroad in the heart, will secure peace and harmony among members. When a difficulty has been thus settled, an offence thus removed, it should not afterward be made a subject of conversation. Let the very remembrance of it perish, if possible. If we suffer ourselves to talk over those trials that are settled, before we are aware, we shall certainly run into the spirit of trial, and a spirit of strife will be engendered. If new trials and disagreement arise, never allow your passions to be inflamed by the ghosts of old difficulties. Never harbor the thought, "It is just like him ; I have not forgotten his former conduct." Such sentiments should not find a lodgment in our hearts.

In exercising church discipline, some respect is to be paid to the age and the character of the offender. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren." An elder, either in age or office, may be in fault, and a fault too which ought to be noticed, but he should be approached in a very kind and respectful manner. In this respect and on all occasions, a proper regard is to be had to those who are set for the defence of the gospel ; or are otherwise officers in the church ; or nursing fathers, who have borne

the burden and heat of the day; and "the younger men as brethren" on the ground of equality.

*What are some of the more prominent cases that should be made the subjects of church labor,*

1. Cases of notorious and complicated wickedness. Licentiousness is never to be allowed to pass unnoticed. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither *fornicators*, nor *idolaters*, nor *adulterers*, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:10—12. Awful delineation! Let the guilty fear. How black and rotten must be the heart of that individual, who under the pretence of *love*, and the promise of *marriage*, would sacrifice to his own caprice and lust, the virtue and innocence of the unsuspecting! And how lost to every principle of virtue must she be, "which flattereth with her words; which forsaketh the guide of her youth, [disregards parental instructions,] and forgetteth the covenant of her God, [casts off the restraints of religion.] For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths to the dead; none that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.—For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell." Prov. 2:16—19; 5:3, 4. To consider such as unfortunate, as objects of pity demanding our sympathy, is not enough. True, we should pity them. But they have placed themselves in the attitude of guilty creatures, exceedingly guilty. What palliation can be found for such guilt, so long as they have God's holy law before them, the blaze of its purity flashing in their face? Do any think that their guilt is atoned for by after-marriage? Will that make amends for a sin which the gospel declares excludeth from the kingdom of heaven? NO, NEVER! And can that church be in the way of prosperity who allows such conduct to pass unnoticed?

ticed? Impossible! Let young brethren and sisters beware of temptation, and flee all youthful lusts.

As fornication, so adultery, is evidence of a woful destitution of grace; and as expressly forbidden in the law of the Lord. "He that goeth in unto his neighbor's wife; whoso toucheth her shall not be innocent. Whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts." Prov. 6:29; 32:35. Look on the picture of the *adulteress*, drawn by the pen of inspiration: "I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves: For the good man is not at home, he has gone a long journey:—She hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." What a portrait! The apostolic instruction in dealing with this class of transgressors, is prompt and decided. In the case of the incestuous Corinthian he says, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto satan—Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 5:4, 5, 13.

The drunkard has no promise of heaven; on the contrary it is declared that he cannot enter there. 1 Cor. 6:10. If he will drink of the cup of devils—get drunk, on wine, beer, cider, or what not, he has no just claim to the Christian name, as he does not possess the Christian character; without deep repentance, and immediate and total reform, he forfeits his standing in the church, and should be dealt with as a transgressor. Nor is the maker or vender of alcoholic

liquors, he who "putteth his bottle to his neighbor's mouth, and maketh him drunken," less a fit subject for church labor, than he that partakes of the soul-destroying beverage.

Covetousness and dishonesty are often sins of sufficient magnitude to justify prompt action on the part of churches. "The hidden things of dishonesty are to be renounced." 2 Cor. 4:2. And that religion which does not make its possessor honest toward God and toward men, will not save the soul. Perfect honesty in all our dealings with our fellow men, is a virtue of high excellence. It ought not to be said of church members, that they are dishonest in their business matters, or unfaithful to their engagements. And as to covetousness, I am aware that there are many who do not consider it a flagrant sin; but what is the testimony of God's word? "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth;" or as this text reads in the margin, "The covetous blesseth himself, he abhorreth the Lord." Says the apostle, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if a man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or *covetous*—no, not to eat." "Be not deceived, neither fornicators—nor covetous—shall inherit the kingdom of God." "And covetousness which is idolatry." Ps. 10:3; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9, 10; Col. 3:5. Has not the time come when this class of professors should be considered guilty of flagrant injustice and sin, classed in the gospel with the thief, the adulterer, and the drunkard? We honestly believe that the extremely covetous member is a proper subject for church labor.

Again—slave-holding, or as the Bible terms it, man-stealing, 1 Tim. 1:10, is a flagrant transgression of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and is by no means to be tolerated in the church. So aggravating was this sin considered under the law, that the transgressor was to be put to death. Exodus 21:16. Every reader of the Scriptures knows that thieves are excluded from the

kingdom of God. No one would consider a sheep-stealer a fit subject for church membership; and all will agree that if a church member were to become guilty of this crime, a labor should be immediately commenced with him. And how much better is a man than a sheep? Try the transgression in this way—let the slave-holder seize on a child, a brother, a sister, or a parent of yours, and then tell us if man-stealing is not the worse of the two crimes. Remember God knows no difference in his treatment or regard between black or white, slaves or freemen; but “hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” Hear the testimony of Dr. Hopkins on the sinfulness of slave-holding or man-stealing: “Slavery is, in every instance, wrong, unrighteous, and oppressive—a very great and crying sin—there being nothing of the kind equal to it on the face of the earth.” And I ask, in the name of common sense, how can it be anything but sin? He first *steals* the man, or buys him knowing him to be stolen; then *robs* him of all his hard earnings, during his natural life. But this is not all—he tears from him all domestic happiness, his *wife* and his *children*; robs him of *himself*; reduces the *image of God* to a *thing*, to a level with beasts and merchandise. If this is not a sin, a sin the most flagrant and heaven-daring, I know not what sin is, unless it be a *heartless indifference* to all this on the part of those who know the blessings of natural and civil liberty, and who moreover have tasted of the sweets of that *impartial* redeeming grace, which always proclaims *liberty to the captives*. Would not such, if in slaveholding states, “do the same” things, as they appear to “have pleasure in them that do them”? Rom. 1:32.

In all these cases of flagrant sins, delay in the work of faithful discipline is criminal and detrimental. These crimes are deliberate, not the result of momentary excitement. If they were the result of the excitement of the moment, the church should exercise forbearance.

There is a wide difference between the sin of Jeroboam and that of Peter ; the former's was premeditated and deliberate ; the latter's the excitement of the moment, followed by speedy repentance. Though there may be signs of genuine repentance in the offender, we believe that in deliberate and flagrant transgressions the honor of religion may require the enforcement of rigid discipline ; their penitence should be allowed to show itself by " bringing forth the fruits of repentance," and full proof should be given to community, that the church does not connive at iniquity, but that it " proves itself clear in this matter." Though Miriam might be sorry that she had spoken against Moses, yet the direction of the Almighty was, that she should be *shut out* of the camp of Israel seven days. Num. 12:14. Churches should recollect this one idea of church discipline, the " clearing" of themselves.

2. A second class of sins that I would notice as deserving of discipline is, *a departure from the faith*. "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." Titus 3:10. Says Mr. A. Fuller, "It is worthy of remark, that the only passage in the New Testament wherein heresy is introduced as an object of discipline, makes no mention of any thing as composing it but what relates to the principles of the party. It may be supposed that those who were accounted heretics by the apostles were as impure in their lives as they were anti-christian in their doctrine, and that they were commonly disturbers of the peace and unity of the churches ; but however this might be, neither of these evils is alledged as the reason why the heretic was rejected. All that is mentioned is this : ' He is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.' He is ' subverted ;' that is, his professed faith in the gospel is in effect overturned or rendered void, consequently he requires to be treated as an unbeliever. He is ' condemned of himself ;' that is, the gospel being a consistent whole, he who rejects

a fundamental principle, while he professes to retain others, is certain to fall into self-contradiction ; which, if clearly pointed out in a ‘first and second admonition,’ and he still persists, he will be compelled obstinately to shut his eyes against the light, and thus ‘sin’ against the dictates of his own conscience.”

But it may be asked by the disorganizer and the latitudinarian, Who is to be judge of what is heresy ? I answer, THE CHURCH ; the same that is to judge what is morality or immorality. To suppose the Christian church incapable of deciding what is heresy, is to charge the direction of the apostle with impertinency. True, the church may err, as well as an individual, though not so liable ; and a possibility to err is what may be predicated of all human judgment, civil and judicial, as well as ecclesiastical ; but no reasonable man rejects such judgment on this account.

3. There are in almost all communities, some who wish to be head or leaders ; and who will attempt to draw away disciples after them. They are sometimes to be found in the church ; men who will set up a party of their own ; a kind of religious demagogues. To such men the instructions of Paul points, “Mark them who cause divisions and offence, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Rom. 16:17, 18. Every well-wisher to the best interests of the church should have an eye on such men. “Mark them”—watch their movements, and you will soon discover their object. “Avoid them”—stand aloof from their dividing measures. Let church members be aware of all such influences or men as cause divisions in Zion ; such men are always restive—are endeavoring to build up a party. They may be known by these three particular things. 1. Their doctrine is new : not according to “that which ye have learned.” 2. They are selfish men ; serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their

own belly." Self lies at the bottom of all their movements. They have some pecuniary end in view, or wish to be set up as leaders, and to be called 'rabbi ;' or they are envious, and fear that others will be more highly esteemed than themselves. 3. "By good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple." They will pretend a very tender regard for those who go with them, talk of the wrongs which themselves have endured, cry aloud against intolerance, and talk much about liberty and freedom from oppression. If such would-be leaders *are* members of the church, the injunction of the apostle should be faithfully attended to ; and they should be reclaimed from their factious conduct or rejected in season, before they sow the seeds of discord, and so divide the church that it cannot exercise the needful discipline. If they are not members of any particular church, as frequently happens, they are not, they are not subjects of church labor ; and in this case, I say, as saith the apostle, "receive them not into your houses, neither bid them God speed." Of all classes most to be dreaded, are those ministers who have trampled upon the feelings of their brethren, and taught doctrine contrary to the Scriptures, until churches have been under the necessity of withdrawing fellowship from them, who then go off railing about the church or denomination, and afterward begin to make appointments here and there, striving to get up an interest and sympathy for themselves as objects of persecution and hard usage. Such will try to get a few personal friends, prejudice the minds of some against their pastor, cause divisions, and draw some away to themselves. They are troublers of Israel ; dangerous men. Let brethren remember the instructions given—" Beware of them—go not after them."

4. " Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us." 2

Thess. 3:6, From verse 11, we learn in what respect they walked disorderly ; " working not at all, but are busy bodies." " Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." " And if any man obey not our word by this epistle," [they had disobeyed his word in his first epistle, (4:11,) and the church still continued to bear with them ; but if they still disregarded his word in his second epistle, then the church's duty was to] " note that man, and have no company with him," (he being totally incorrigible,) " that he may be ashamed ; yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." You should " consider him more an enemy to himself than to you ; and admonish him as a brother, though you have ceased to hold religious communion with him. His soul is still of infinite value ; labor to get it saved." Slothfulness is exceedingly unbecoming professors of the gospel ; and the mischievous effects of 'busy bodies' in the church, has been previously shown. The instructions here adduced from the lively oracles of Divine Truth, are to the effect, that if such transgressors cannot be reclaimed by kind discipline, they are to be disowned by the church. There are other offences which do not require either immediate or ultimate exclusion, but are subjects of admonition. They should be tenderly and faithfully admonished. But let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves.

Whenever an individual is under the censure of the church, the brethren should not manifest any undue sympathy or fondness by visiting him and receiving visits from him, or in any way seem to connive at his conduct or side with him. If individual members do this they may be esteemed by him as his friends, while others who are acting a far more consistent part, are regarded as his enemies. Let *all* the church carry an even steady hand at such times, according to the instruction in 1 Cor. 5:11. Those who disregard this in-

struction will, so far as their influence goes, render the censure of the church ineffectual. Christians must act in concert in the church, or they may as well do nothing. Members who violate this rule are virtually partakers of other men's sins, and deserve the rebukes of the church for counteracting its measures. Let a faithful and seasonable gospel discipline be considered of the first importance ; and though church labor may be often unpleasant in itself, its fruits will be healthful and salutary—churches walking in all the beauty and glory of gospel order.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE MORE GENERAL DUTIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH.

Church organization being a religious compact, a union entered into for the mutual good of the whole, as well as for spreading the knowledge of the Savior in the world, ALL its members should take a deep interest in all the plans and labors of the church, and seek its prosperity by all laudable means. Every one should feel that, as an *individual*, he must feel responsibility and act for Zion's up-building. However numerous the church may be, whatever is accomplished by it, is the result of individual exertion; and if every member is engaged, it is but individual effort in concert. No member for one moment ought to harbor the idea that he has nothing to do to promote its interests. Having made choice of some particular branch of the church of God as their home, Christians ought never to be indifferent to its best welfare. Whatever affects its prosperity, should affect them; as they have identified their interest with the interests of their church. This is as it ought to be. But it is a humiliating fact, that many members, from the time that they unite with the church, appear to take little or no interest in its affairs. They scarcely know who are added or who are excluded; or if they chance to know of additions being made, it gives them little pleasure, or if members are excluded, but little pain! Such is the indifference of very many to the interests of their own church. They seldom attend a church meeting, or know what is done in them but from some other source. Such a course of conduct, such a spirit of apathy in brethren who have covenanted to live and walk together, is sinful and exceedingly wrong. Every Christian should be, to say the least, as deeply interested in the state and prosperity of his own church, as he is to the success of his

own temporal affairs. If he is, he will fill his place in the house of God, which is the church, the pillar and ground of the truth. Let us now pass in review some of the more general duties of members in the church.

I. They should attend all the meetings of the church, so far as circumstances will admit. 1. They should be punctual in their attendance on the public worship of the Sabbath—punctual at their own meeting. We have but little confidence in the sentiment but too often expressed, “I can enjoy myself as well at other meetings as at our own.” Every Christian should possess so much of a catholic spirit as to be kind and free toward all saints, and as to enjoy the worship of God in other communions when circumstances put him in their way; but it is no less true that every Christian should have a particular home in some church, and should feel a *special* interest in the meetings of *his own church*. Here they are to enjoy themselves best, just as the man of a well regulated family enjoys himself best *at home*. This is the only consistent ground a Christian can occupy on this point. We blame no Calvinistic Baptist, Congregationalist, or Methodist, for enjoying *his own* meeting better than he would enjoy a Free-will Baptist meeting. And always when it is convenient for them to attend worship in their own communion, it is as consistent for them to do it, as it is for our brethren to prefer a Free-will Baptist meeting. Nor should any be so tenacious of denominational views as to refuse to worship in another society, when a case occurs in which they cannot with their own. The author would only have the Christian reader understand that the meeting of *his own church* is emphatically *his meeting*.

Much is depending on the *manner* and the *spirit* with which we go up to the house of worship. If we would be greatly blessed by the public ministrations of the gospel, we should seek the Divine blessing by faith and humble prayer. On Lord’s day morning every Christian ought to make it a point to retire to *his closet*, and

with reading of the Scriptures and prayer, seek for the Holy Spirit's blessing on his own soul, and on the assembly about to convene for Divine service. How poorly prepared must the individual be to enter the sanctuary as a worshipper of a spiritual God, who has not previously sought for a preparation at the altar of prayer. Here let God's people labor till their souls get tuned for the spiritual duties and privileges of this blessed day of rest. And as you go to the house of God, never allow yourselves to converse upon worldly matters, but have your thoughts on God and the gospel. Nor allow yourselves in the criminal and sinful practice to stop at the door of the church, and enter into conversation with others on the various topics of the times. How much better to seat yourself immediately in the sanctuary, and have a few moments to raise the soul in silent yet fervent prayer to God for his blessing upon those services in which hundreds are about to engage. It is surprising that those who have tasted of the true delight of spiritual worship, should expect to be greatly refreshed by the gospel, who go to its public ministrations with no preparation of soul, or who allow themselves to have all religious feeling dissipated by irreligious conversation before the exercises of devotion have commenced. How is the Sabbath desecrated, the Holy Spirit grieved, and the influence of good impressions lost, by a worldly conversation, even on the part of professed Christians. A custom is common in many country congregations of gathering about the door of the church before and between meetings to converse together on temporal things ; but its influence is bad on the truths of the gospel which they are about to hear or have just listened to, and the practice ought to be abandoned. When public services are closed, the worshippers should return to their homes devoutly meditating on the truths they have listened to, and embrace the first opportunity for closet retirement to seek again the blessings of the Holy Spirit on themselves and on the whole assembly. So much on the manner

of attending on the ministrations of the blessed gospel. It should seem that no pious reader of these pages would need any argument from my pen on the importance of punctuality at the sanctuary; certainly he will not, if he duly appreciates the rich blessing of this stated means of grace.

2. None can question but all church members ought to feel the importance of sustaining the prayer meeting. It is doubtless true that in proportion to the interest a church feels in its prayer meetings, the true spirit of piety ebbs or flows. It always speaks well for one's piety to be deeply interested in this social means of grace. If spirituality is to prosper and flourish among the members, the church must sustain the stated prayer meetings. In this particular, let every member of the church, the youthful members and all, make it a matter of fixed principle, to come up to the help of the Lord, and stand in their place. Brethren and sisters are all to be encouraged to improve their gifts in such meetings, both in prayer and exhortation. If church members would be faithful, there would be but little complaint of dull and uninteresting prayer meetings. The church would be "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." "Let none complain of a want of gifts, but improve on what they possess by prayer, praise, and exhortation. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name," "exhorting one another," and stirring up each other to love and good works. It is morally wrong for the brethren to withhold their gifts in the social meetings of the church. Whoever has been born of God has a gift sufficient to be brought forward and to edify that circle of believers which has assembled to ask God to pour out the Holy Spirit on the church and the world. All should attend when circumstances do not specially prevent; and all should do something to add to the inter-

est of the meeting, which should never be left to be carried on by a few only.

3. Church members should attend the monthly conferencee. These meetings are of vital importance to the spirituality, union and strength of the church ; and they have always been highly prized by truly pious Christians. Every member ought to regard the time set apart by the church for conference as *sacred*, never allowing any common business or circumstance to detain him from such meetings. In these covenant meetings the brethren and sisters are to embrace the first opportunity in giving a relation of their travel in the Divine life. Here the pastor and whole church become better acquainted with the religious state of the whole membership, a spiritual interest is kept up, and all are edified.

4. The monthly concert of prayer for the cause of Missions and other benevolent efforts, is usually among the meetings of a prosperous church ; and it is the duty of the members to attend and participate in them. It is much to be regretted, that many who profess to feel anxious for the triumphs of the gospel over the superstitions of heathenism, should feel so little interest in the concert of prayer. In many churches there are some members who seldom, if ever, attend the concert ! Why this indifference ? I know of no meeting better calculated to lead one to a just sense of the goodness of God to us—to fill us with gratitude and humility, than the concert. As the church comes together to pray for those who have never heard the news of salvation by Christ ; as they become acquainted with the labors and successes of missionaries here and there on heathen climes ; as their hearts blend together in devout prayer for those fellow Christians who are toiling to lead the pagan idolater to Jesus Christ ; how does it awaken the zeal of Christians at home to devote themselves anew to the service of God ! Or if in the concert, as is the case often, hearts go up in prayer to the court of Heaven for speedy gospel triumphs over the suffering

innocence and guilty oppression of our own land, and mention is made before God of the three millions of our own down-trodden countrymen ; or there is a simultaneous desire of souls for God's blessing on the many thousands of our almost forgotten seamen ; we ask, must not the exercises and the feelings of such concerts of prayer for the spread of Christ's kingdom and glory, be for good upon our own souls ? Let us then be at the monthly concert, and our prayers and offerings be presented, along with the many thousands who are thus engaged everywhere.

5. Church members are in duty bound to attend also those meetings which are held for promoting the business interests of the church, and for disciplining its members ; at least all the male members are to attend such meetings. It is wrong here to attempt to shift off responsibility on others. The time of trial is the very time when your help is most needed. If all the members of the church are united, and feel the interest which each ought to feel, how would it lighten the burden too often thrown upon "a few," who too frequently have to be the 'burden bearers' in church labors or in society business. None should seek for excuse from action at such times, though even our duties may be painful.

II. It has pleased God to constitute the Christian church on such principles that it is free from those cumbrous ceremonies and complicated rituals with which the Jewish church was burdened. But he has been pleased to institute two simple though significant ordinances to be perpetuated in the church till the end of time ; Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A regard to these gospel institutions, is the duty of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not only types of most important events, but in the observance of them they are both positive commands. " Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death ? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was

raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Rom. 6:3, 4. Not only is the *resurrection of Jesus* kept in view by baptism, but also the resurrection of his followers: "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" 1 Cor. 15:29. That is, if there is no resurrection, why is it figured forth by baptism? Why are ye buried in water, and raised again in baptism, if there is no resurrection? As baptism points to the *resurrection*, so the sacrament of the supper is instituted to show forth the *death* of Christ, and both are to be perpetuated till His second coming without sin unto salvation. Who that has felt the fullness of Jesus' love in his soul, but loves these ordinances, and but delights to walk in them, even as He walked? Every member of the church, unless unavoidably detained, should be found seated at the table of his Lord at the stated communion season. A sense of our unworthiness should never keep us away from the ordinance. The unworthy certainly need this means of grace; and it was for their spiritual edification that their Redeemer has made it the duty of his people to record his dying love. Because Christians are weak, they need to renew their strength at the communion feast. It has looked to me like *lightly esteeming* the institutions which Christ has given his church, to see with what apparent indifference some church members have looked upon the sacrament of communion. Is it not sad to be compelled to know, that some members have enjoyed frequent opportunities, in which they have not attended to the ordinance; and that some may have belonged to the church for years who not once sat at the communion! What a blot and scandal on their high and holy profession. The services of the communion are always among the most impressive and solemn seasons, to the pious and devout. It cannot but be solemn, for it is contemplating DEATH; nor be otherwise than quickening,

for it is contemplating THE death that gives LIFE to the world—hope to the perishing, redemption to those who were lost.

Let Christians, then, seek for a *preparation* for this interesting occasion and blessed ordinance, by self examination, and prayer, with humblings of themselves before God. But however unworthy they may feel themselves to be, let them never turn their back upon the Divine ordinance ! If, with a suitable preparation and a penitent heart, in faith believing, they approach the table of their Lord, they will see in those symbols, the bruised body and the flowing blood of the blessed Redeemer, which are the true bread from heaven and the fountain that cleanseth from all sin. And how do such seasons keep in remembrance Christ's dying love, and endear the Savior to all believing hearts ! It is not alone a blessing on individual souls, but to the church collectively. It cements hearts together, and draws more closely the bonds of union in the body.

III. Another duty arising from the church compact is, that every member bear his just part in defraying the expenses of the church. No society of Christians can exist long and carry forward the purposes for which it was constituted without expenses ; and any member who is unwilling to bear his proportion of the expense of the church, is unworthy of a standing in it. Very possibly this is one reason why some choose not to unite with a church ; but what would this bespeak in relation to the piety of such ! It would be well if every man, woman, and child, were in the habit of doing something to sustain the cause of religion ; at least this should be the habit of every professor of religion. This would be cultivating the spirit of benevolence, and lay a foundation for regularity and system in contributing to sustain the gospel at home, and promulgate it in foreign countries ; a great desideratum in our own denomination, if not in others, when it is considered how deficient in system and benevolent action many of the churches are. If a habit of giving and

doing is once formed, a foundation well laid, the work of benevolence and of obligation is then easily performed. There are expenses accruing from the duty of a church to support its pastor and sustain the gospel at home ; and then there is the duty devolving on every Christian to render pecuniary aid toward giving the gospel to the destitute in his own and other countries. The method which is best to be adopted to support the gospel at home in any given church, may be different in different places. Some do it by a tax in the church or society, more still do it by a free subscription, and some principally by contributions. We are opposed to bringing the compulsion of the law to support the gospel of Christ. Each member of the church ought to be willing to do his part cheerfully. I once knew a young man, a member of the church and making good wages, who subscribed for the minister to preach one half the time for one year in his own church, the sum of one dollar ; yet away from the meeting a portion of the year, was unwilling and utterly refused to pay his small subscription, not a quarter as much as he should have paid. Yet this trifling circumstance was allowed to create alienation of feelings toward his church, and toward the pastor whom he denominated a ‘hireling.’ You ask, what was this young man’s religion worth—or at least his gospel privileges? Let his own conduct answer—“not *one dollar*. ” And yet this is not the only church under the sun, afflicted with stingy and selfish members. Such are a disgrace to their holy profession! There is no avoiding the charge.

A standing in the Christian church is not to be considered a place for idleness and ease ; so far from it, the church is a vineyard for labor, a place for activity and usefulness ; an association of good men and true, in which capacity they can accomplish more for the glory of God and salvation of men, than they could possibly do in any other way. It should be the inquiry with every member, what can I *do* to promote the cause of Christ ; and each should be ready of his own free-

will to bear his part in all the expenses of the church, and to assist in carrying forward any measures that may be adopted for the furtherance of the gospel. As has been shown in another respect, so in this particular, all should yield to the opinion of the majority. When the church has decided on the mode to defray its financial concerns, let each one be ready to co-operate in *that way*. It ill becomes any member or members to object to the *mode*, and because they shall think some other plan as good or better, refuse to do their part. This is not the part of the generous-hearted and willing Christian. Has not Christ done so much for us, that we should be willing to do what we reasonably can to promote the gospel, according as the Lord has prospered us, and as good stewards of the manifold grace of God?

IV. When in the providence of God, members leave the vicinity of their own church, to spend some considerable length of time, let them seek out in their new location a church of their own denomination and attend its meeting; and if they locate away permanently, or for a year or two, let them unite with the church into whose vicinity they have removed. These are important suggestions. Attend the meeting of your denomination, even should the distance be a little greater, or in other respects it be a little less convenient. A just attachment and preference to the doctrine, usages and worship of his own church, would lead many a member to do this, without any remark from me. Why should not Christians throw their influence on the side of their own denomination, under such circumstances, as well as in the church to which they were formerly attached? Pious young men going abroad to engage in school-teaching, should always, when there are several churches in the vicinity, attend the meetings of their own order; and from their position in society they may exert an influence over others, and do the church an essential service. Hundreds of our Free-will Baptist brethren and sisters belonging

to churches in the country, go every year into cities and manufacturing villages to spend a year or two, and then to return again. They are at their option to attend worship with any church they please ; that is, there are churches of the several evangelical denominations in the place. How many such appear to feel themselves under no obligations to attend their own meetings, more than those of any other society. Away they go to attend any meeting their fancy may point out. Is this right ? Is there, then, no peculiar attachment to the denomination in which, spiritually, they have been born and nurtured ? Does not such a course bring grief upon pastors and churches, which in such places need all the encouragement and aid which properly belong to them ? Is there not here verily a fault among us ? Do the members of the other communions feel no particular interest in their own Zion—and ought not Free-will Baptists ? Let the pastors and the churches from which our members go out to these places, advise our young brethren and sisters on this point, and give them letters of introduction to pastors of churches of the city ; and let such as go abroad feel the proper attachment to their own Zion, and their obligation always to give their influence to their own churches, as well when abroad as at home. The force of these suggestions is only to this point, namely, that it is the duty of every Christian to labor where he is most needed and can effect the greatest amount of good, all things being considered.

In the instances here contemplated, in which the new location is expected to be permanent, or for years, it is the duty of members to unite with the church, by commendation or letter from their former church. In uniting there should be no needless delay. Many by waiting to get acquainted with their new brethren, it is to be feared, have lost all interest in the church relation, and finally have backslidden from God. It may be that the church with which you first united seems nearer to you than another can ; but this is no reason

why you should not join another, when you are removed from the limits and privileges of the former. The noble Thessalonians not only loved their own particular congregation, but all the brethren which were in all Macedonia. This is the nature of true brotherly love, and looks like Bible religion. What a loss does Zion sustain from inattention to these things! Many brethren are so located that they are no benefit to the church, nor the church to them; yet these brethren could be well accommodated in the church where they now reside, receive its benefits, and on their part aid the church. Let every church member duly consider these things.

## CHAPTER VI.

DUTIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS TO THEIR  
PASTOR.

It is desirable that every church should enjoy the labors of a faithful pastor. It is essential to its permanent prosperity. The Epistles to the Corinthians show that the church at Corinth was very corrupt even in the days of Paul, and from the fact that no allusion is made to its pastor or pastors in either epistle, it is to be inferred either that the church had none, or that they were not the right kind of men, and that this was one cause of the corrupt state of the church. The Philippian church, on the other hand, was in a state of prosperity, which the apostle addresses, mentioning the saints "with the bishops and deacons;" and commends them for obeying, not only in his presence but 'much more' in his absence. Hence, I think the inference just, that the Corinthian church had no pastor at all, or none that was faithful and efficient, whilst the Philippian church enjoyed the faithful labors of its "bishops and deacons." It is in vain to hope for long continued prosperity in any society of Christians without the devoted services of a pastor or bishop. We should naturally suppose that in so important a relation as *pastor* and *people*, minister and church—a relation that ought to exist in every religious society—there would be some plain Scriptural rules given, by which the members should be governed in their conduct toward him, as well as he in his duties toward them. Such rules we have.

1. They should submit to his authority. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." Heb. 13:17. The ground of submission is the fact of his being their spiritual guide, "watching for their souls," as those that must give an account."

The Hebrew Christians were directed to obey those who had the rule over them, considering the end of their conversation (lives,) and to follow their faith- or example. This gave to their pastors authority. Again —the pastor is an officer in the church, and not only an officer, but the *highest officer* of which the Scriptures speak. We fear that our views of democracy and equality may have had an influence in some instances to lower down the dignity of the ministerial office to a level with the laity ; and that hence the office and authority of the minister is lost sight of. Pastors are set as teachers and guides, as overseers of the flock, to watch for its spiritual interests, and as such possess responsibilities and authority, which do not obtain in private capacity. The nature of their commission also gives authority to the gospel ministry. They are ambassadors sent forth in Christ's stead to present God's terms of reconciliation to rebellious sinners. 2 Cor. 5:20. Are not their instructions momentous, and ought they not to be received? They are called of God, anointed and set over the flock by the Holy Ghost. Acts 20:28. Hence the ministers of Jesus, pastors of the churches, should be regarded as having a degree of authority from God in the churches, arising directly from the office of pastor which they fill.\* This authority is, however, always to be regulated by the word of God; and pastors are never to be arbitrary in its exercise; they are never to lord it over the consciences of the brethren; nor to exercise the duties of their office and oversight of the flock "by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lord's over God's

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\* If the members of churches would more generally regard the advice of their pastors, for instance, relative to attending the meetings of such ministers as have been disowned for improper conduct, or other irresponsible speakers, how much trouble would often be avoided. But the advice of the faithful pastor disregarded, false teachers are encouraged, the seeds of discord are sown, division or trials follow, the church is troubled, and good comes to no one.

heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

2. Church members should highly esteem their pastor. The instruction here is very explicit; "Know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." 1 Thess 5:12, 13. Such is the Bible rule on the esteem brethren are to have for their minister, and the sentiment ought to be carefully acted on by every church member, and its observance must inevitably contribute to the prosperity of Zion. For their work's sake, faithful pastors are to be more than respected, they are to be *esteemed*, 'very highly esteemed in love.' Men who 'labor' for the spiritual interests of others being thus esteemed by those for whom they labor, their counsel and instructions will have the greater effect. If churches esteem their minister highly in love, they will never allow themselves to speak disrespectfully of him, or his labors. No; they will rather manifest their 'esteem' by speaking well of him, and sustaining him by hearty co-operation of effort. If any of the frailties of poor human nature are noticed, they will be ready to cast the mantle of charity over them. If any thing is heard in his sermons, through an infelicitous selection of words, a circumstance sometimes to be justly expected in extemporeaneous preaching, a proper esteem for our minister will never lead us to magnify such things into an offence, or by finding fault with whatever does not chance to suit *us*, injure his influence and usefulness.—I refer to this, under the conviction that a fault-finding disposition in hearers has often done much toward destroying the power of truth in the best of sermons. Punctual attendance on the ministrations of your pastor, instead of running away to attend other meetings, is a proper expression of your esteem of him. Again—if you esteem your pastor as a faithful minister ought to be esteemed by those who belong to his church, you will defend him against prejudice or asper-

sion. Often a single word may correct a misapprehension, or remove an ill-founded prejudice. The brethren may do much to make the labors of their pastor effectual, by their own proper appreciation of those labors.

3. It is the duty of the members in the church to co-operate with their pastor in his plans for the promotion of the cause of religion among the people. How disheartening it must always be to the minister, when he makes an effort to get up a Sabbath school, or to improve and add to the efficiency of one already established, if he can find but little sympathy or interest among the members of his church. Or if he appoints a few extra meetings in the hope of increasing the religious interest among the people of his charge, under what discouragements must he sink in his labors, if his own brethren will not come up to the work. In a church walking in gospel order, and where the relation of pastor and people is felt as it ought to be, all the members hold themselves in readiness to engage in all the plans of the pastor to build up Zion, and they should always communicate any information in their possession which may be of service to him, respecting the state of feeling among the unconverted, or any other facts the knowledge of which would aid him in the faithful performance of his numerous duties. The duty of members to co-operate with their pastor, will extend to the using of proper efforts to increase his congregation. This is accomplished in punctual attendance themselves, and besides, in these two ways, inviting those to attend who do not already, and inducing regularity and constancy of attendance on the part of others. This is a duty not involving dollars and cents; and a little pains taken in this way by brethren would be amply compensated by a fuller congregation and thus creating a rational hope that the ministration of the gospel will accomplish a greater amount of good. Reader, have you ever tried to increase your pastor's congregation? Why should you not? We would

not have you attempt to proselyte; but "go out into the highways and hedges" in your neighborhoods, and "compel" those accustomed to stay away, to go with you to the house of God.

4. Church members are in duty bound to PRAY for their pastor. This is a duty frequently enjoined on Christians in the word of God. Nothing is more reasonable. In your closets, at your family altars, in the social gathering, pray for your pastor. Let your prayers ascend the holy hill of Zion on his behalf whom God hath set to watch for souls. They are to pray that utterance may be given to them to make known the mystery of the gospel. Eph. 6:19. If Paul needed the prayers of the church to enable him thus to preach, do not the ministers of Jesus now need them? Most certainly. Self-prosperity should seem to prompt every member of the church to pray for the ministry of the word. Would you be blessed under his labors? Then pray that God would clothe him with the power of an endless life; that he may come before his congregation with clear perceptions of divine truth, a warm heart, and guided by wisdom from above. They should pray that a door of utterance may be open before him. Col. 4:3. That is, that God would give him access to the hearts of men. Is it not a most reasonable duty? Are we to indulge in fault-finding that our pastor does not so preach as to lead sinners to Christ, while we neglect the duty of praying for him? It were an inconsistency. Every Christian should pray that God will open the hearts of sinners to receive with meekness the ingrafted word; and bear fruit to the glory of God.

A proper consideration of the vast responsibilities of Christ's ambassadors, and of their intense anxiety to be the instrumentality of saving souls, will lead pious church members to pray much for them. How often do they see the conflicts of Zion, and weep over her desolations! How often behold sinners apparently nigh the kingdom, and yet are their hopes destined to

be blasted—how often see the youth of promise, turn back from the profession of godliness, to the beggarly elements of the world—the love of many wax cold, of whom they had cherished the most sanguine expectations—the enemies of the church triumphing over her low state; and divisions arising among those who once loved as brethren! Under such depressing circumstances, how does the faithful pastor's heart fail within him! and shall he not possess a deep and fervent interest in your prayers? He wishes to do his church and people good, and often mourns that he is no more useful. Then stay up his hands! Pray fervently that God will bless his labors in the up-building of the church, and the conversion of impenitent sinners.

5. Churches are to see that their pastors have a liberal support. There needs no arguments from us to show that the pastor is entitled to a support from those for whom he labours. Every one familiar with the Scriptures, knows that this is the *duty* of the church. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." Gal. 6:6. Now if there were no other text in the Bible teaching the same doctrine, this should forever settle the question, that the "laborer is worthy of his hire." Again—Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Let every church member understand that if this work is done, it must be done by *individuals*. Hence the apostle says, "We beseech you, brethren—know them which labor among you—esteem them very highly in love," &c. Upon this passage Dr. A. Clarke observes: "As men delight to serve those whom they love, it necessarily follows that they should provide for them, and see that they want neither the *necessaries* nor *conveniences* of life; I do not say *comforts*, though these also should be furnished; but of these the genuine messengers of Christ are frequently destitute. However they should have food, raiment, and lodging,

for themselves and their households. These they ought to have for their work's sake." The church is to know its pastor's wants, and supply them ; and every member is to feel an interest and to perform his part in this matter. You cannot as the Bible requires esteem your pastor, unless you are ready both to sympathize with him in his afflictions, and to relieve him in his temporal wants. Will this make him a hireling, hinder his spirituality, or produce an alienation of mind in him from the interests of the church? Nay, verily. Are not ministers of like passions with yourselves ; and will not *kindness* and attention to their temporal state, on the part of the church, increase their interest and render doubly cheerful their labors for your spiritual welfare? Certainly they can appreciate sympathy; and are not insensible to the pleasure arising from that just appreciation of their labors, manifested by their church in promptly supporting them, that they may give themselves wholly to the duties of the ministry. The support of the ministry, is an item of great importance in the duties of church members toward their pastor ; and though I only refer to it thus briefly, it cannot but be hoped that every church will look carefully at this matter, and not allow their pastors to suffer, nor oblige them to come down from their holy calling from the necessity of supporting themselves when they should be preaching the gospel. If *all* the members of the churches would be willing to do their duty on this subject, the relation between pastor and people would not so frequently be broken up. The relation would be more frequently sustained among us for years together ; and the interest and usefulness of the pastoral relation be deepened and extended, mutual confidence and affection strengthening with time. To my own mind, there is interest gathering around the thought, not only that the pastor *dwells* among his own people, but that his mortal remains, slumbering along side those for whose religious benefit he has labored, till the loud trumpet sounding, the pastor and his flock shall

awake to meet the Chief Shepherd, to deliver up his charge and receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

## CHAPTER VII.

## DUTY OF PASTORS TO THE CHURCH.

It is the appointment of God that churches should have pastors.\* "And God hath set some in the

\* When in the providence of God, a church becomes destitute of a pastor, it becomes their duty to secure one with the least possible delay. They should not, however, be in so much haste as not to become acquainted with his character, life and usefulness. In making choice of a pastor, they should act in view of the following considerations—1. Is he a man of sound piety? A man of God devoted to his cause? 2. Does he possess respectable preaching talents, capable of commanding and sustaining a congregation in the place contemplated? Though he may be a suitable pastor for some congregations, he may not be for yours, or he may be for yours, and not for some others. 3. Does he *practice* what he *preaches*? Is his life and conduct,—at home and abroad, in his intercourse with the world, and in his pastoral visits,—such as becomes a minister of the gospel? 4. Is he a prudent man?—managing the affairs of the church with wisdom and prudence? If he is turbulent, headstrong, rash and imprudent, he will not be likely to build up the church; but cause division and scatter the flock. 5. Has he a good report from those that are without? Has he the public confidence as a minister; and the confidence of the ministers and churches with which he has formerly associated. If he has not, you will need to deal very cautiously, or your church may be involved in difficulties. The advice of good and experienced ministers should be duly regarded at such times. Let questions like the above be considered and satisfactorily answered, in the important business of making choice of pastors.

In so far as it is possible, it is always desirable that there be union in selecting a pastor. To this end there frequently must be a kind yielding on the part of some. All will scarcely be fully agreed in the same minister; and the church will probably never agree in him whom some members will regard as their favorite preacher. In such cases if the minority is small, consistency would require that they should yield; but if it is considerable, embracing the older and more experienced portion of the church, the majority should not press the subject; but call on another minister in whom the church can be united. We may rest assured that he who would consent to settle over a church under circumstances of division on this point, either of his own mind or to gratify the feelings of his personal friends, while it is done to the grief of other members, will not be greatly useful in his field of labor. O, what trouble has Zion experienced from the imprudence of some ministers, in accepting an invitation to the pastoral relation under such circumstances. Every possible means should be employed to secure union, harmony, and cordiality of feeling.

When a church has made choice of a good pastor, "Let them

church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers." "And he gave some pastors and teachers." 1 Cor. 12:28. Eph. 4:11. Their office is briefly stated in the following passage of Holy Writ: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to ALL THE FLOCK, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [literally bishops or pastors] TO FEED the church of God." Acts 20:28. The author does not design to discuss the *qualifications* of a pastor, but to state briefly some of the more prominent *duties of the pastor towards his church*.

He should be a member of the church of which he has the pastoral charge. We deprecate the too common practice of some ministers, of holding membership in one church while they sustain the relation of pastor to another. They should belong to the church where they labor, shrink not from its trials, and be subject to its discipline.

As he is to take the oversight of the flock, it is his duty to become well acquainted with the people of his charge. Consequently he must visit them. He should be a visitant in their families, and know how they live at home. As he is to take heed to *all* the flock, that he as under-shepherd may in some measure adopt the language of the Great Shepherd. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." If the pastor would do this to all his charge, and not have this duty encroach on his numerous other duties, his visits should be short, and truly pastoral. Ministers should not calculate on much formal visiting; they may occasionally, but not frequently. Such visits are not so useful; nor has he time for them. His people should not expect them of him; and they will not, if they consider how necessarily his responsibilities demand all his time. The object in these pastoral visits is the spiritual improvement of his own

therewith be content." Why want a change? Nothing is more unfavorable to the prosperity of many churches, than their fickleness in relation to their pastor. May the time soon come when changes shall be less frequent!

soul and the souls of his people, by seasons of religious conversation, prayer and praise. These should be free, familiar, and faithful, that he may learn the spiritual state of the family, domestics, children and all, and administer to each one pious instruction.

It should be a sacred duty with every pastor to visit the *poor* of his church. What pastor has not felt richly compensated for his pains in visiting this portion of his charge, as he witnesses the pleasing satisfaction it always affords them to have a visit from *their* minister. It is to such families, like cool water to a thirsty soul. The enemy of all righteousness will tempt them to believe they are slighted because they are poor; but these pastoral calls will remove such suspicions and give them confidence in the piety and impartiality of the pastor, as well as furnish them the pious instruction they need. The *youthful* members of the church should receive much faithful and seasonable instruction and encouragement. One timely and well conducted visit will often do them more real good, than many excellent sermons.

The pastor's duty to his church, will often conduct him to the bed-side of the *sick*. His faithful visits here, are as the visits of Mercy's angels. Here your people will expect you to be found, as faithfully administering to the wants of the soul, as the physician to the necessities of the body. Let always such visits be so made as not to weary the sick. Often inquiries are to be addressed to the friends, instead of directly to them. Not unfrequently an erroneous opinion obtains respecting the propriety of introducing religion into the sick room. It is sufficient to ask, who needs the consolations and instructions of *RELIGION*, if the sick and dying do not? Let such visits be properly regulated, and they will always tend to do good. The *aged* and *afflicted* are to be sought out, and the balm of consolation poured into their wounded hearts.

Becoming familiarly acquainted with the condition and wants of his people, the pastor is prepared under-

standingly to feed them with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, and to give to each one his portion in due season. And from a diligent study of the gospel, he is to be prepared to bring out of the exhaustless treasury things new and old, leading forward his flock to higher and holier attainments. He should feed them with knowledge, that their views of the character and providences of God may be enlarged ;—with sound doctrine, that they may be steadfast in the truth ;—with healthful spiritual food, that they may thirst for righteousness and true holiness.

Again—It is what the pastor owes to his church to keep his people apprised of the moral state of the great human family, and of the benevolent efforts of Christianity to ameliorate the condition of a sinful world. He will be expected, consequently, to present the claims of Christian missions, and all other causes of true gospel benevolence, feeling himself in them an interest, and laboring to secure the interest of his hearers. And he should faithfully bear gospel testimony against intemperance, covetousness, licentiousness, slavery, and kindred sins, teaching their baneful influence against religion, and fortifying the minds of his charge against them.

In the ordinary means of grace it cannot be supposed any pastor should be forgetful of duty. He is to preach the word, being instant in season and out of season ; not on the Sabbath alone, but at other times in different neighborhoods of his parish and in the community around. He is himself to be punctual in the social meetings of his church, when other duties do not call him away; and encourage the membership to punctuality of attendance, and a faithful improvement of the gifts.

The pastor owes it to his church to administer the ordinances of the gospel faithfully, according to the pattern shown unto him. ... We say according to the " pattern given ;" accordingly, when the gospel he preach-

es is believed, the Savior he proclaims is embraced, and they ask for the 'ordinances,' he is to BAPTIZE them, not substitute sprinkling or pouring for the mode of Christ and the apostles; the administrator and candidate are both to go down into the water, when the pastor is to "bury" the believer with Christ by baptism, i. e. *immersion*. This the author says to pastors of Free-will Baptist churches. If others think otherwise, it is enough for our present purpose to say *we have not so learned Christ*. The sacrament of the Lord's supper should be attended regularly, and, with no positive instruction how frequently, as often as the church judges expedient. Some churches commune once a month, some once in two, others once in three months. We doubt not that the faithful pastor will find that it will contribute to the spirituality of his church to commemorate the Savior's death at regular seasons and often. Let the pastor remember that the Lord's table is spread for the disciples of Jesus. *Acts 20:7.* It was not instituted for any sect, but for the church. We appeal to every heart warmed with love for God and his people, what looks more heavenly, more like ushering in that glorious day when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, than to witness the disciples of our common Savior, though of different names, communing together around the sacramental board! How sweet thus to walk in gospel order!

It is the pastor's duty toward his church to see that wholesome discipline is exercised, and to use all proper means to build up the church. Not that *he* is to discipline the church, but to see that the church does its duty toward transgressors seasonably. And he is himself as pastor, to rebuke, exhort, encourage, admonish and entreat, with much patience and perseverance; and yet with the law of kindness in his heart. Very much may the faithful pastor do 'out of the pulpit.' He must strive to build up the church in faith, love, holiness and all the Christian graces. To this end he is to consecrate his talents, in his study, pastoral visits, in the

desk, and at the throne of grace. Changes are constantly occurring in the church, as well as in the world ; some are removing, others are called away from labors to rewards. He is to labor for an addition to its numbers ; for in its changes, if none are added, it will dwindle, and ultimately become extinct. We are free to confess that if a pastor does not feel an anxiety to increase the numbers of his church, he is deficient in an important trait. To proselyte is beneath the dignity of the pastoral office. But we would have every pastor labor faithfully for the conversion of sinners to God, and to gather believers into the church. There are frequently Christians living unconnected with any church ; these he may gather in to be of use to the church, and it to them. But never let the minister wish to add to his church only for the sake of numbers ; always being careful that none are received but upon good evidence of thorough conversion. A proper interest for Sabbath schools and Bible classes, is among the most effectual means for building up the church.

Once more. The pastor must PRAY for his people. This is a sweet and most precious duty, to any minister deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of his flock. After he has done all that he can do, he should feel that he is entirely dependent on the aid of the Holy Spirit, for success in his ministrations. This feeling of entire dependence will lead him to cry mightily to God. He will never think that he has done his whole duty, without daily supplication to God for the Divine blessing upon his people. As the Jewish high priest wore on his breast-plate the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, so should the Christian pastor have engraven upon his heart the names of all his church; and as he enters into the " holiest" by the " new and living way," he should present them before the throne of God, and there, in the name of Jesus, plead in their behalf. A church could scarcely be afflicted with a greater curse than to be burdened with a prayerless pastor. Every minister should be able to say with

Paul : " I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy ;—for God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." The pastor is to cultivate in his heart a tender affection toward all his people ; and his daily walk ought to be a practical illustration of the doctrine which he preaches, that he may again say with the great apostle : " Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably I behaved myself among you that believe ; as ye know how I exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." A faithful pastor's reward is great, and will be great, at the resurrection of the just. He has now the confidence of his people that he seeks not *theirs* but *them* ; and that he endeavors so to labor, that he may present them spotless before the Savior at his coming and kingdom, having done while among them the will of God.

## PART III.

### THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS ARISING FROM THEIR CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONS.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN THEIR INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD.

All Christians sustain not only the relation of Christian and church member, but that of citizen and neighbor also; and as such, must have intercourse with their fellow men, and to some extent with all classes of society. This is the necessary order of things, or they must "needs go out of the world." But while they mingle with other men in society, and have commerce with them, they are constantly to maintain the dignity of their Christian profession. In all business matters, as in religious affairs, the *word* of a Christian should be *sacred*. Men sustaining the Christian character must strictly adhere to the law of truth and veracity, in all their dealings with their fellow men. This law has been thus defined by Dr. Wayland: "Moral truth consists in our intention to convey to another, to the best of our ability, the conception of a fact, exactly as it exists in our own minds. Physical truth consists in conveying to another the conception of a fact, precisely as it actually exists or existed. These two, it is evi-

dent, do not always coincide. I may innocently have obtained an incorrect conception of a fact myself, and yet it is my intention to convey it to another precisely as it exists in my own mind. Here then, is a *moral* truth, but a *physical* untruth. Or again, I may have a correct conception of a fact, supposing it to be an incorrect one, but may convey it to another with the intention to deceive. Here then, is a moral falsehood, and a physical truth. Pure truth is communicated only when I have a correct conception of a fact, and communicate it, intentionally, to another precisely as it exists in my own mind."

1. This being believed to be correct, God having commanded every man to speak "truth with his neighbor," it follows that a Christian is to be strictly a *man of truth*; that this is an important part of real Christianity. It is a sad confession, yet needful to be made, that there are some bearing the profession of Christians, who do not sustain the reputation of persons of strict truth and veracity in their business affairs. Religion can scarcely in any other way be more deeply wounded, than by unqualified falsehoods, or the base equivocations of its professors. What say the oracles of God? "Lie not one to another, brethren; seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds." "Thou shalt not bear false witness against a neighbor." "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile." "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

These Bible precepts forbid us to utter *for truth* what we know to be false. You are at liberty to suppose a case for an illustration, which you do not know to exist, but this is not presented as a truth, but is imagined to exist for the sake of illustration; and as you do not present it for truth, a supposition is allowable. By the above Scriptures, we are forbidden to state *for truth* what we do not know to be truth. There are many things which men assert as truth,

without knowing them to be so ; as when one declares what are the motives of another man. There are other things which are mere matters of opinion ; and these we are not to utter as known truths. " If a man utter anything as truth, he assumes the responsibility of knowing it to be so. If he who makes the assertion be not responsible, where shall the responsibility rest ? And, if any man utter what he chooses, under no responsibility, there is an end of all credibility." It follows that men are never to utter as truth, what they do not know to be truth. On matters of opinion, we may give an opinion, in probable matters, state what to us seems most probable.

Again—we are not at liberty to state *facts* in such a manner as to convey a false impression to the hearers. If you were to state that you called on your friend L—, to spend the evening ; and there you met Mr. S. who tarried till 10 o'clock ; and soon after he left, your friend missed his pocket-book, containing one hundred dollars, which he believed was stolen ;—now, though you do not say that S. has stolen L's money, yet you (designedly) so connect the narration as to leave this impression on your hearers—and are guilty of a *falsehood*. As the guilt arises from the *intention* to deceive, and as the effect is the same, any false impression with this design, will be equally criminal with a downright untruth; whether the deception be accomplished by the tone of voice, a look of the eye, or a motion of the hand. Says Dr. Wayland, " The evil of falsehood in small matters, in lies told to amuse, in petty exaggerations, and in complimentary discourse, is not by any means duly estimated. Let it be always borne in mind, that he who knowingly utters what is false, tells a lie ; and a lie, whether white or of any other color, is a violation of the command of that God, by whom we must be judged. And let us also remember that there is no vice which, more easily than this, stupifies a man's conscience. He who tells lies frequently, will soon become an habitual liar ; and an

habitual liar will soon lose the power of readily distinguishing between the conceptions of his imagination and the recollections of his memory."

2. Christians are to "walk honestly towards them which are without." Having renounced the "hidden things of dishonesty," they are to exhibit, in all their intercourse with men, *strict moral honesty*. And here again I may ask, Is not the cause of Christ wounded by *dishonesty* in some of its professors? Of what value is religion, if it does not make men honest? The gospel proposes to do this, and does it in the hearts of all who adopt its holy precepts; and if any of its professors do not walk honestly, their profession is vain and a libel on religion. We are of the opinion that there is no *one* cause, considered in the abstract, which forms so great an obstacle in the way of the conversion of sinners, as the dishonest walk of the professed friends of the gospel. Is not this the complaint most frequently made against religion? For myself, I have met it from almost every quarter. How sad, even to be compelled to hear this complaint made, "I have been more taken in by professors of religion, than by any people that I have dealt with"! I suppose that this is *not* generally true; but, alas! that there should even be any foundation for such a reproach! My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Men walk dishonestly who recommend any commodity exposed for sale, above its real worth. The purchaser is deceived, and soon finds the article not to be all it was recommended. Such deception as to the real value of an article offered for sale, ought not to be practiced by professed Christians. Again—some will swerve from a fair bargain. Their word has been taken in good faith, and a contract fairly concluded; but they cannot be depended upon. This is to forfeit one's obligation, and in the end will secure to him the name of a dishonest man. Will it not be a hard matter to remove the obstacle to all religious influence from the mind of the injured man, which such conduct on the

part of professors puts in his way? The injured party is not ignorant of what is just and honorable, and his injury has come through sheer dishonesty. He also, who to secure a competency for himself and family, shall put his property out of his hands, and so cheat his creditors out of their honest debts, is a dishonest man, and if a professed Christian, disgraces his profession, and brings a wound and reproach on Christ's cause.

3. Punctuality is a duty which the Christian owes to all men with whom he has business; an endeavor to meet all engagements as they are made. No man has a moral right to excite the expectation of another person, which he does not studiously aim to fulfill. If we have promised to pay a certain sum, or give a certain amount for an object, and by virtue of this promise an expectation has been raised, we are morally bound to redeem our pledge, and according to its conditions. Not to do it, is a violation of the law of veracity, and shows a sad disregard of punctuality. It is well said, that punctuality is the life of business. It is therefore important to every man. But it is a virtue which the whole world has reason to expect from Christians. It is well too, to make a merit of being strictly punctual in 'little things,' both in all our temporal engagements, and in all our religious duties.

4. Christians are bound by the gospel of Christ in the strongest obligation, to observe faithfully the law of reciprocity in all their dealings. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Matt. 7:12. Here is the law, which may well be called the golden rule. By it Christians are to be guided, rather than by the maxims of the world. Were it universally acted on, it would restore to society much of its primeval happiness. As you would not wish to be deceived, defrauded, slandered, cheated out of your honest due—so you should not do unto others. This commandment is exceeding broad—"ALL THINGS." In all matters of trade, buying and

selling, exchanging one commodity for another, the law of reciprocity is to be observed, and you are to do to others as you would wish them to do to you, if your circumstances were reversed. To act and to trade thus, is the duty of all Christians; and as professors of the gospel they are forbidden to govern their business by those unrighteous maxims of irreligious business men which contradict the law of Christ. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," is God's instruction to his people, and to be observed by them in all their transactions between themselves, and toward the world.

5. Religion is to have an important consideration and weight in the whole life of Christians; and in an elective government like ours, God's people are under an obligation to let the principles of the glorious gospel govern their political action. The duty to pray for our rulers is directly enjoined on all Christians; and it is no less their duty to use their right of the elective franchise to have good and just men elected to be rulers. "Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." Ex. 18:21. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." 2 Sam. 23:3. Such are the moral qualifications which God requires in rulers. The consequence of having wicked men for rulers, is stated thus: "As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people." "When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Prov. 28:15; 22:2. This effect is illustrated by historical facts in the Scriptures. Look at the case of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; and Ahab, though faithfully admonished by Elijah; and at the moral and political condition of the people under their reigns; and tell us if "the people do not mourn" when "the wicked bear rule." Now look at the moral and political condition of the

same people under the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, and see the difference when the rulers are just men ruling in the fear of God. Christians are to pray for their rulers. God has commanded that "first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." 1 Tim. 2:2,3. If then, it is our duty to pray for our rulers, are we not morally bound so to exercise our rights of elective franchise, as to put into office just men ruling in the fear of God; men of righteousness and high moral principle? Can Christians consistently vote for men as rulers, of known wickedness and want of principle; and then pray that our rulers may be just, ruling in the fear of God? Is the man, trained from very childhood to tyranize over crushed humanity, a tyrant and oppressor from his cradle, fitted to rule over a free Republican people? And can a Christian give his suffrage for the oppressing slaveholder, a duelist, or an adulterer, and then insult High Heaven by praying that such may rule in the fear of God? Nay, my brethren—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Talk of oppressive laws, and yet give your vote for the oppressor! Mourn over the wrongs of the crushed slave, and then vote for such men as will crush him lower, and bind more strongly the bands of slavery! Let men good and true, let Christians learn soon what they must learn, that if they have an interest for the abused bondman, they have a duty to discharge for him at the ballot-box. Slavery in America is a creature of unrighteous human law, and legislation has an important part to perform in terminating it.

8. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers—for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Hence it is the duty of Christians to lead quiet and peaceable lives, and to obey the laws of their country—unless those laws conflict with the law of God; then like Daniel, and Peter, and John, they are to

obey God rather than man. They are always to sustain good and wholesome law, the just rules of civil as well as religious society. To be good citizens, as well as devoted Christians, in all things; fearing God and working righteousness, that they may be accepted of him.

## CHAPTER II.

DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO CO-OPERATE IN THE  
GREAT WORK OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

A profession of Christianity supposes a *renunciation* of the *world*, and the *dedication of one's self to God*. They are to appreciate the sentiment, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." Christians willing to do good as they have "opportunity," will be ready to co-operate with the Benevolent Societies, designed to spread abroad the knowledge of God, and promote the happiness of man. And the pious and benevolent ought to lose no time in the great work of ameliorating the moral condition of the great human family; remembering that annually nearly *thirty millions* of human souls pass from this to the eternal world! Some of these go to rest in glory; but, alas! how many of them go into the spirit land, unprepared to meet a holy God. How rational, then, that those who have the gospel of Jesus Christ, should do all in their power to give it to the destitute; and how inconsistent is the course of the rich and opulent, who devote their extensive incomes to secure still larger earthly possessions; or the proud and gay, in richly decorating their persons; when in a few years death will break up all their worldly schemes, and they lie down in the grave, which knows no distinctions of rich or poor. The one great question alone to be asked alike of all will be, Have they honored God and done good to men, with their riches and their talents?

The present age is an active one. Everything about us seems to be on the advance; everything moving forward. Shall religion alone recede? No! Christians must act. They must go forth and *labor* in the vineyard. It is not a time to stand idle. The world is to

be converted, and Christians- are the instrumentality. God has commanded, " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The heathen must have the Bible—the gospel must be preached to them. They are ignorant of the way of salvation—of their future destiny, or of what they should do—with-out hope and without God in the world. And what a field for labor opens upon us on every hand. Our own land is filling up with multitudes from the nations of Europe, almost as ignorant as the heathen ; infidelity and damning errors are abounding ; evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse. I ask, Has not the Church of Christ a mighty work of Christian benevolence before them ; and ought not all Christians to rouse themselves to the vast responsibilities which God de-volves on the church ? Let us look over some of the departments of Christian benevolence, in which the peo-ple of God should be engaged.

1. The great commission, just quoted, which the Savior has given the church—go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature—makes it the duty of every Christian, heartily and actively proportionate to his means, to engage in the cause of Mis-sions. The darkness of heathenism must be dispelled by the light of the glorious gospel ; and the errors of our own country be counteracted by religious truth. The duty of co-operation in both Home and Foreign Mission Societies, on the part of all the pious, must be at once apparent. And let me ask, Is it not only the duty, but the sweet privilege, of God's dear people, to enlist in the blessed enterprise of spreading the knowl-edge of salvation ? Let me ask, Is there any where a Christian, can there be found a Free-will Baptist, who takes no part, does nothing for the cause of Chris-tian missions ? Are there any whose souls are not stirred within them to co-operate in sustaining our mis-sionaries in India, and in posts of great usefulness in our own land ? Alas, there are some who do *nothing*. Friends, what are your *reasons* for not coming up to

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the help of the Lord, and of your brethren! Answer, what are they, to yourself and to God! Nay, at once take hold of duty, and let your name be registered with these who stand pledged to sustain the cause of missions.

2. In the cause of Temperance, churches and all Christians should firmly maintain a high and holy stand. None should stand aloof from enrolling their names and giving their influence with those who are engaged in the heaven-born work of shutting the flood gates of intemperance, and rescuing the inebriate from a drunkard's grave. How does intemperance to-day even, roll its dark and deadly waves over the land! Misery, pauperism, crimes, and death, all invariably follow in its wake. Of the one thousand five hundred convicts in Sing Sing and Auburn, it is stated that one thousand one hundred and twenty-five were intemperate. Take this as a single example, and what a tide of misery is let out upon society by the single instrumentality of the liquor business. Every good man and Christian is to oppose this work of death. And what is the right ground for the church to occupy, with its whole phalanx of membership? I answer, total abstinence from all that intoxicates. 'Touch not—taste not—handle not.' Churches are not to tolerate their members in vending or drinking alcohol in whatever shape. In this day of light no Christian is excusable, who stands aloof from the Temperance cause.

3. The cause of Moral Reform should receive the hearty co-operation of the pious and good in every Christian communion. For must not the friends of piety be also the fast friends of virtue? The Divine law in respect to chastity must be strictly observed, if peace and happiness are preserved in any community. The violations of this law are threatened with the most solemn denunciations of God: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Eph. 5:5. Of all the evils with which a community or a na-

tion can be cursed, I can scarcely conceive of a greater than the evil of licentiousness. What are its fruits? "In 1801, the single city of Paris reported 4,881 illegitimate births, 720 divorces, 8,258 deaths in poor houses, and 201 found dead in the streets! In 1803, the Prefect of Police reported to the grand judges that in this same city, 12,076 common prostitutes, 1,550 kept mistresses, and 308 licensed brothels!" Such were the fruits of licentiousness in a single city forty years ago, and truth tells us, it is no better now. Nay, but you say, this was the capital of *infidel* France. True, but be not too fast; look into the cities of the Christian United States, in the light of living *facts*, and you will know that the fruits of licentiousness are deepening and widening among us. Think of the guilty sons, and the ruined daughters, which are annually sacrificed to this 'god,' and of the untold sorrows and sighs of fond but disappointed and heart-broken parents and friends, occasioned by the violations of the law of chastity. O, here is an evil over which Mercy's angels might well weep! An evil which calls for the steady and faithful action of the Christian church, to oppose and roll back. Let the people of God espouse heartily the work of Moral Reform; maintain a sleepless vigilance on unchastity toward all the membership in the churches; admonish and warn, and instruct the unsuspecting; and by a strict adherence to the law of purity from that public opinion which shall fasten the brand of deserved infamy on the libertine. It is not only what the gospel of Christ requires, but a duty, which Christians owe to the world.

4. Since God has said, "Blessed are the peace makers," it is unquestionably the duty of professors of the gospel to espouse the cause of Peace. Jesus has said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight: but, now is my kingdom not from hence." The spirit of war, and the spirit of God, can no more possess the heart at the same time, than love, and hatred. That

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a moment on these facts on war. Says Elihu Burritt, "From 1789 to March 4, 1843, \$962,755,680 have been lavished upon preparations for war in time of peace, within little more than half a century, by this model Republic! Another fact: From January 1, 1836, to March 3, 1843, the war expenses of this Government were \$153,954,881! five millions more than all the civil expenses from 1788 to 1843! Since the *Reformation* (!!) Great Britain has been engaged *sixty-five years* in the prosecution of seven wars; for which she expended, in our currency, \$8,992,120,000. It has been estimated by our Missionaries, that a school of fifty heathen children, on the continent of India, would cost \$150 dollars per annum. This sum, if applied to the education of the heathen, would have schooled 46,-062,254 children per annum for 65 years!" So much for the expense of a small portion of the wars, in the article of dollars and cents only. But what is this to the loss of life, and the detriment of the war spirit, to the gospel of the Prince of Peace? At the single battle of Waterloo, no less than 84,000 human beings lay cold in death upon the field of battle! [I quote from memory, though confident of being correct.] In war, what multitudes of multitudes have been made widows and orphans, as well as hosts of probationers hurried uncalled and unprepared into eternity, is known to God alone! Shall not those who profess to be disciples of the PRINCE OF PEACE, rally around the standard of Peace, and lend a helping hand to the Peace cause, which is now struggling nobly to form a correct public opinion of war? It is another duty that Christians owe to a world lying in sin.

5. Anti-slavery is a Benevolent Association into which the churches of Jesus Christ ought to throw an undivided and holy influence. The law of reciprocity, before referred to, which Christ has given for the action of every Christian, should be acted on in our duty toward the *slave*: "*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to*

them." Apply it, reversing circumstances. Were you in slavery, and your brethren enjoying freedom, would you not have them *think* of you? Would you not have them *pray* for you? Aye, more; were you, your wife, children, husband, father, mother, brother, sister, all groaning beneath the galling yoke of Southern slavery, would you not have your brethren, enjoying all the blessings of freedom and religion, *VOTE* for you? Pause one moment, gentle reader; God knows your heart; a sincere answer is required. As ye *would*, so *do* ye. I will not here dwell longer, nor need I. It is the solemn duty of every Christian, to pray and act for the poor slave; and never relax his efforts, until they are released by death, or the last wretched bondman cease clanking his chains and be made FREE.

6. Christians are to be the warm advocates and firm supporters of *Education*. All history will teach us that Education has an intimate connection with the best prosperity of pure Christianity. In the sixteenth century, one of the principal causes in preparing the way for the Great Reformation from Popery, was the revival of letters. And one of the most efficient means for extending and perpetuating it, was the efforts of Luther and his co-adjutors, for the general education of the people. Luther's great work which should make his efforts against the corrupt papacy effectual, was to give the Bible to the whole German Empire. The Holy Scriptures, locked up in the Latin language, and prohibited to the people by the pope, but now translated by the reformer into German, and put into every man's hand, prepared the way for the extensive revival of evangelical religion. Indeed what had now been the state of the Protestant religion, had not Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin, and all the reformers, engaged heartily in the cause of education, and made it administer as an indispensable handmaid to religion? Or, I may ask, what would have been now the religious, as well as civil, state of our own country, but for the particular interest which from the first has been given to edu-

cation in New England ; and but for the unequalled facilities for education spread out all over the land, how ill prepared woudl be the American churches to resist the influences in our country against religion, and perform their allotted part in spreading Christianity among the nations ? Missionaries in every heathen land find it an object, second only to preaching the gospel, to establish schools for educating the peoples. We would have every Free-will Baptist, aye, every pious man of whatever communion, be the steadfast and firm supporter of education.

Every Christian should be not only the supporter of general education, and lend his influence to promote useful learning as one of the greatest human blessings and most closely connected with the triumphs of the gospel—but the churches in all their membership ought to feel a lively interest in furnishing the needful facilities for a proper education in the gospel ministry. We speak advisedly when we say that in the Free-will Baptist denomination there has been, and still is, a sad deficiency in this respect. Many of our ministers enter upon the duties of the Sacred office, with a very limited knowledge of the Holy Scriptures ; too little taught in the glorious gospel which they are to teach to others. The consequence has been that though God has given us prosperity, we have but few churches in cities and large towns, those great arteries and influential places of the nations, and many of our churches are pining for want of efficient pastors. But the evil is beginning to be remedied by the efforts of the Education Society, and the establishment of the Biblical School now in successful operation. At this School not a few of our young brethren are acquiring a knowledge of the word of God to prepare them the better for the responsible duties of the pastoral office, as well as to put them on a proper course of study during all the years of their ministry. Is not here an object worthy the prayers and friendly support of every pious and intelligent Free-will Baptist? Who can tell the good to our churches and

our beloved Zion destined to be accomplished by this instrumentality? This has been regarded as a matter of so much importance to the interests of religion in years to come, that the author has not felt at liberty to omit expressing his ardent hope, that every pious member of the churches will feel a lively interest in the welfare, and heartily co-operate to promote the prosperity of the Biblical School.

The cause of a proper education in connection with religion, may be promoted in several ways. The circulation of the Holy Scriptures, Volumes, and Tracts, at home and abroad, is indeed a great enterprise, and accomplishing much for the salvation of men. I dare say, that every intelligent Christian who possesses the means, will be ready to co-operate in these measures. The religious education of millions of immortal souls, is a work that calls on the churches for a self-denying activity. Perhaps it scarcely needs be said, yet it should be remembered, that *self-culture* in religious and useful knowledge, is the duty of God's people. Piety is more useful, as it is more intelligent; and never was the time so propitious, and the facilities so abundant, as at the present day. Let us, dear brethren, redeem the time. Live in remembrance of our high natures and destiny, improve our talents, and glorify God in all things.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE DUTY OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN.

The adaptation of the physical and moral laws under which man is placed, to the formation of human character, is beautifully illustrated in the relation which exists between the law of marriage and the law of parent and child. For instance, we see that mankind are incapable of sustaining the relation of parent, until they have arrived at the age of maturity, attained to considerable knowledge and experience, and become capable of such labor as will enable them to support and protect their offspring. Were this otherwise, were children liable to become parents—parent and child would grow up together in physical and intellectual imbecility, and the progress of men in virtue and knowledge would be impossible, even if the whole race did not perish from want and disease.

The law of marriage is one for life, and not to be dissolved except for one cause only, the cause of whoredom. “Then came some of the Pharisees to him, and tempting him, asked, ‘Can a man, upon every pretence, divorce his wife? He answered, Have ye not read, that at the beginning when the Creator made man, he made a male and a female? and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and adhere to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no longer two but one flesh. What then God hath conjoined, let no man separate. Wherefore I say unto you, whosoever divorceth his wife, except for whoredom, and marrieth another, committeth adultery.’” Matt. 19:3—6, 9. [Dr. Campbell’s translation as quoted by Dr. Wayland.] We are here taught that marriage is an institution of God, and subject to his law alone. Hence the civil law is not binding upon the conscience only in so far as it agrees with the law of God. The contract of mar-

riage is mutual ; and those entering into it form a society, that is, they have something in common, which equally belongs to both. Hence they are mutually interested in the present and eternal well-being of their offspring. The parent is bound to give to the child the power and benefit of his own experience. The parent being endowed with a love of his children, which renders it a pleasure to do them good ; and on the other hand there is in the child, if not a corresponding love of the parent, a disposition to submit to his wishes (unless he has been mismanaged) and yield to his authority.

From these considerations, we learn the relation which exists between parents and children. It is the relation of superior to inferior. The *right* of the parent is to *command*; the *duty* of the child is to *obey*. Authority belongs to one, submission to the other. It is not a mere matter of convenience or of expediency, but it belongs to the relations under which we are created. The motive which should govern the obligation, on both sides, is affection. The power of the parent should never be exercised through love of power or caprice, but simply for the child's advantage. The duty then of parents is, to educate and bring up their children in such a way as they believe will best promote the good of the child in this world, and that which is to come. This duty embraces several particulars.\*

I. They are bound to provide for their *support*. That it is the duty of the parents to sustain the helpless being whom they have brought into existence, need not be proved. As to the expensiveness of this maintenance, the circumstances under which the providence of God places them must determine to a considerable extent. Hence those parents who spend their time in idleness, or their money for pleasure, or for li-

\* The author has before stated his indebtedness for much of the sentiment in this chapter, to Dr. Wayland : and as he presents it in an abbreviated form, the credit can be better given here than in the text.

quor, while their children are in want, are violating one of the most prominent laws of our nature.

II. *They should educate them.*

1. They should give them a physical education. They are to take all proper means to secure to the child a good physical constitution. They should prescribe such food and in such quantities, as shall contribute to nature, and consequently to health. But how often is this rule violated, particularly in the season of *green fruit*. How much pain and sickness is occasioned—how many constitutions are ruined and lives are lost, by inattention of parents to the diet of their children. Early habits of temperance should be inculcated in the minds of children and its practical influence secured. They are to prescribe such labor and exercise as shall tend to develop the physical powers, and call into action all the functions of the physical system; properly inure them to hardship, and render them patient of labor. Much of the happiness of man depends upon early physical discipline; and who shall enforce this discipline, if parents do not? The proper development of the physical constitution being a parental duty, the wickedness of those parents is seen, who compel their children to labor beyond their strength, and so destroy the vigor of their constitution, even in the tender years of childhood. The power of the parent over his child was given, to be exerted for the child's good, not to gratify the parent's selfishness or love of gain. This form of violating parental obligation is not confined to any class of society. "The ambitious mother, who, for the sake of her own elevation, or the aggrandizement of her family, and without any respect to the happiness of her child, educates her daughter in all the trickery of fashionable fascination, dwarfing her mind, sensualizing her aspirations, for the chance of negotiating for her a profitable match, regardless of the character of him to whom she is to be united for life, falls under precisely the same condemnation." That mother, too, must be guilty, who, to

secure what her false taste esteems a pretty form, compresses the body of her daughter by *tight lacing*, which so contracts the chest that the lungs cannot properly be inflated nor the heart perform its proper functions. How do mothers violate the duty of giving a proper physical education to their daughters; and how many daughters, from this source alone, inherit ruined constitutions for life, if indeed they do not find an early grave! Parents cannot too highly appreciate the importance of a proper physical education,

One of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a family, is to be brought up in *idleness*. The parent who suffers his children to grow up in indolence, is preparing them, not for a happy, but for a discontented and miserable life. This was one of the causes for the overthrow of Sodom : "Fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness." Ezek. 16:49.\* Idleness is always the school of vice. We consider this to be one of the most direct causes of the corrupt state of morals at the south : The whites live in idleness, while the slaves do the labor which supports them. Luxury, gambling, drinking, and the like, are the legitimate fruits of idleness. Let parents remember the old truthful adage.—If you do not keep your children employed, satan will.

2. It is the parent's duty to give his children an *intellectual education*. A child enters the world utterly ignorant ; possessed of nothing else than a collection of impulses and capabilities. He can be happy and

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\* Every child should be made to feel an interest in the pecuniary affairs of the family, and that he may do something for its welfare, even at an early age. However wealthy, and independent the family may be, all children should be learned how to work. Men's circumstances sometimes change suddenly ; the rich may be reduced to poverty, or the group of happy children may become orphans and be thrown upon their own resources. Hence every son and daughter should know how to work at some useful employment. They should be trained to feel an interest in the family support and maintenance, as early as from ten to fourteen years of age ; and habits of industry formed thus early. Were this done, many a mother left with the care of children, would be saved the necessity of breaking up her family.

useful, only as this ignorance is dispelled by education, and these impulses and capabilities rightly directed and unfolded by the plastic hand of the parent. He is in duty bound to impart to his offspring the knowledge and experience which he has gained. But usually this can be done only in part by the parent himself; and it becomes his duty to provide his child with a teacher, or to place him at school; still remembering that he is himself to be the chief superintendent of the education of his own children. The teacher does not remove from the parents any of the responsibilities of the parental relation. The parent also is bound to inform himself of the peculiar habits and genius, and to reflect upon the probable future situation of his child; and then deliberately to consider what sort of an education will most conduce to his future happiness and usefulness. In the education of their children, parents are to select proper and useful teachers, such as shall impress a proper character and habits upon youthful minds. "And, if a parent is under obligation to do this, he is of course, under obligation to *take time to do it*, and so to construct the arrangements of his family and business, *that it may be done*. He has no right to say, that he has *no time* for these duties. If God have required them of him, as is the fact, he has time exactly for them; and the truth is, he has not time for those other occupations which interfere with them. If he neglect them, he does it to the injury of his children, and, as he will ascertain when it is too late, his own disappointment and misery."

The parent can impart no earthly good to his child, that will bear but an ill comparison with a good intellectual education. Then if the child becomes disabled for manual labor, he still possesses the means of gaining a livelihood. Misfortune may strip your children of an estate in a moment; but if they possess a good education, far better than lands or money, they have a rich inheritance for life, an estate which no man can wrest from them.

Children should be early accustomed to an exercise of their own judgment; be taught to lean upon their own faculties. We can see no reason why children, even in childhood, should not be taught to contemplate the value of things, the propriety of actions, the philosophy of ways and means. In this way a correct judgment may be early formed, which shall grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength. It must be a very pleasing part of parental duty, to thus draw out the latent powers of the youthful mind, causing it to expand into wider ranges of thought, in all the every day routine of the common matters in active life.

3. Parents are to labor to give their children a thorough and right *moral education*. "The eternal destiny of the child is placed, in a most important sense, in the hands of its parents. The parent is under obligation to instruct, and cause his child to be instructed, in those religious sentiments which he believes to be according to the will of God. With his duty in this respect, until the child becomes able to decide for himself, no one has a right to interfere. If the parent be in error, the fault is not in teaching the child what he believes, but in believing what is false, without having used the means which God has given him to arrive at the truth. But if such be the responsibility, and so exclusive the authority of the parent, it is manifest that he is under double obligation to ascertain what is the will of God, and in what manner the future happiness of an immortal soul can be secured. As soon as he becomes a parent, his decisions on this subject involve the future happiness or misery, not only of his own soul, but also that of another. Both considerations, therefore, impose on him the obligation of coming to a serious and solemn decision upon his moral condition and prospects.

"But besides that of making himself acquainted with the doctrines of religion, the relation in which he stands imposes upon the parent several other duties:

It is his duty to teach his child its duties to God and man, and to produce in its mind a permanent conviction of its moral responsibilities. This is to be done, not only by direct, but also by indirect precept; and by directing it to such trains of observation and reflection as shall create a correct moral estimate of actions and their consequences. And specially should it be the constant effort of the parent to cultivate in his child a spirit of piety, or a right feeling toward God, the true source of every other virtue. Inasmuch as the present state of man is morally imperfect, and every individual is a sharer in that imperfection, it is the duty of the parent to eradicate, so far as is in his power, the wrong propensities of his children. He should watch with ceaseless vigilance, for the first appearance of pride, obstinacy, malice, envy, vanity, cruelty, revenge, anger, lying, and their kindred vices; and by steadfast and unwearied assiduity, strive to extirpate them before they have gained firmness by age, or vigor by indulgence." One would justly consider that parent to be blamed who should suffer his child to grow up with a broken limb unset, thus making him a cripple for life. But how much greater is the misfortune of that child who has been suffered to grow up with a lying tongue, or an unsubdued temper! Listen to the voice of a condemned criminal: "Let those who read this brief narrative, take heed how they bear malice: had my passion been governed, Nelson Mortimer would never have been a murderer." Who can tell how much the parents of that young man were to be blamed? Let every parent consider this subject in all its importance.

The Christian church has long been shackled in its great work of benevolence, and has long groaned under the weight of guilt and condemnation arising from a sordid, covetous disposition in multitudes of its members. The sure way in which this evil is to be fully removed is, to form a correct standard of Christian benevolence in the minds of children. Benevolence should be early inculcated on every mind from very

childhood. Children are to be taught that money has no true value only as it can be made subservient to the good of man. It is even melancholy to think of the covetousness, selfishness, and sordid views of gain, into which some young children are educated. It should seem far more congenial to their natures, that a kind, generous, benevolent feeling, should warm and dilate their little hearts. Let parents look to the generous disposition of their children, cherish, strengthen and expand it, and check any tendency in the child which should lead him to deify his little self, and shut up his heart to a kind and noble generosity toward others.

*What are the means to secure this moral and religious education of children?*

1. The first grand object should be to establish the proper government. The government of children should be *mild* but *decisive*. The end should be to secure *obedience*. Subordination, submission, obedience, must be obtained. There must be no unnecessary severity, but firmness in governing, which shall always secure the end in view, namely, filial and cordial obedience. Parental authority is indispensable in the proper regulation of a family. This is always to be kindly exercised, but promptly and effectually. One law is to govern all; no partiality or favoritism is to be indulged by the parent toward any part of his family. This would lead to envy, and often to very unhappy results. The trouble in the family of Jacob arising from his partiality for Joseph, should warn and instruct all parents. The reason and moral sense of the child are to be appealed to; and as children advance toward maturity, their opinions and judgment may often be consulted, and they be taught to put confidence in themselves against the time when they are to step into the responsibilities of manhood. The proper example must accompany parental precepts. "Inasmuch as precept will be of no avail without a correspondent example, a parent is under obligation, not only to set no example by which the evil dispositions of his child will be cher-

ished, but to set such example as will be most likely to remove them. A passionate, selfish, envious man, must expect that in spite of all his precepts, his children will be passionate, selfish, and envious." But an even-handed conduct accompanying mild and firm parental precepts, will secure filial affection and good family government.

2. An efficient way to impart a moral education to children is, to instruct them into the truths of Christianity. Impart to them a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, containing as they do the best code of moral science in the world. See that your children read the Bible; and take pains to interest them in its great and saving truths, by illustrating and explaining them to their comprehension. They shall be better than a chain of gold about their neck. Hearken to the words of a condemned criminal. When the Thairs of Boston, Erie Co. N. Y. were in Buffalo jail, under the sentence of death for murder, they were occasionally visited by Eld. R. M. C——. As he entered their prison at one time, one of them was reading the Bible by the dim light emitted through the prison grates; who, with a deep sigh exclaimed, as he looked up and saw Elder C., "Ah! Elder, if I had read my Bible half as much in all my life, as I have by the light through these grates, I should never have murdered L——." Think of this, ye who are parents, and lay the foundation of the moral education of your child, in a knowledge of the word of God.

3. Parents should farther prosecute the moral education of their children, by cultivating in their tender hearts a high regard for Christianity and Christians. It is painful to see how lightly many children of pious parents will speak of the people of God, ministers of the gospel, or the duties of religion! This bespeaks a wrong education in religious matters, a defect somewhere in the proper parental example or instructions. To avoid such injudicious effects in the minds of the young, let all the duties of family religion be properly

attended to. Parents are to see that every child is in his place, and giving his attention, at the hour of family devotions. A family reared up under the well regulated devotions of pious parents will not be likely to speak lightly of the cause of Christ, or the duties and responsibilities of such as profess the gospel. Much do the *family devotions* of pious parents have to do in forming the right moral and religious education of the deathless minds of their offspring. These duties, injudiciously discharged or neglected, will beget in the minds of children lax views of religion; but judiciously and faithfully performed, will inspire in their minds a right esteem for Christians, the Bible, and religion, if indeed this be not the instrumentality which God shall employ to make them early pious.

4. It is a parental duty to be observed in the moral education of the young, that children be taught properly to observe the Christian Sabbath. God has consecrated the day as *holy time*; a seventh part of life, to be specially devoted to the worship of God and religious improvement of the immortal soul. There is much of Sabbath desecration and profanation in the community, and ought not every friend of virtue and of Christianity, to put forth a hand to stay the progress of the evil? Let parents particularly impress on the minds of their children, souls whom God has committed to their charge *to educate for eternity*, a high veneration for the Holy Sabbath, and the sanctuary of God on that day! Should they not be guarded with sleepless vigilance against doing aught that shall desecrate the Lord's day?

5. As all the efforts of the most pious and faithful parents are liable to be counteracted by the influence of the vicious and profane, all parents are bound in duty to be careful as to the company which their children are to keep, and the associations they form. Remember "one sinner destroyeth much good." That parent is false to his sacred charge and recreant to his precious trust, who, to gratify the child, secure the favor of oth-

ers, or avoid the charge of singularity, shall allow his child to associate with such youths as he fears would prove injurious to his principles or his morals. "Men are known by the company they keep ;" and it is equally true that much of the future character of the young may be estimated by the character of those who are the associates of their childhood and youth. The virtue of your child, and those principles of a just moral education which you are sedulously engraving upon his mind, may suffer irreparable loss, from even slight associations with the vicious. Let parents, then, perform every duty toward their children, which parental love can suggest to them ; and they shall secure to their offspring that education which shall be to them of incomparably more worth than the proudest estate or abundance of gold and silver.

NOTE. Before closing this chapter, the author wishes to present a few Scripture precepts relative to the Duties of Children to their Parents.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Ex. 20:12. To this St. Paul refers, when he says, it is the first commandment with promise..

"My son, keep the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. They shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Prov. 8:8, 9. "Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Prov. 4:20. "A wise son heareth his father's instructions, but a scorner heareth not rebuke." 13:1. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Eph. 6:1. "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Col. 3:20.

Children are not only commanded to *obey* their parents, but to *reverence* them. "Honor thy father and thy mother ;" that is, render that course of conduct toward them, which is due from an inferior to a superior, from *children* to *parents*. And this respect and reverence should increase as the parents advance in age.

"Despise not thy mother when she is old." Proverbs 23:22.

As it is the duty of parents to support and educate their children, so in turn it is the duty of children to support their parents, if in their power, and the circumstances of parents demand it. That person is a monster of a man, who should refuse to administer to the support and comfort of his parents under the infirmities of old age. The Divine instruction bearing upon this point, is thus unequivocally expressed; "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. 5:8. Such are the rules by which God would have children govern themselves in their conduct toward their parents; and such should be the practice of every youth professing piety.

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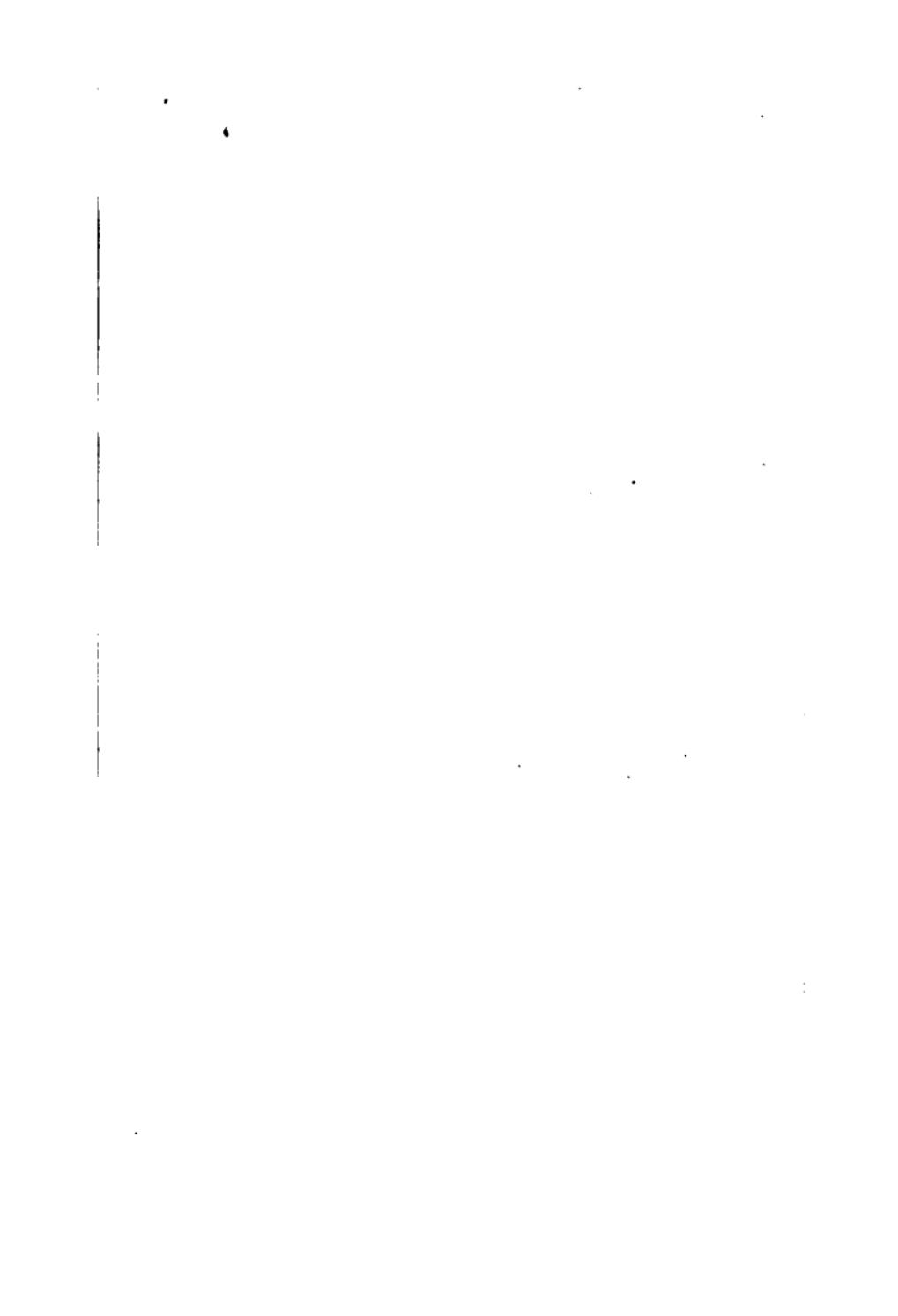
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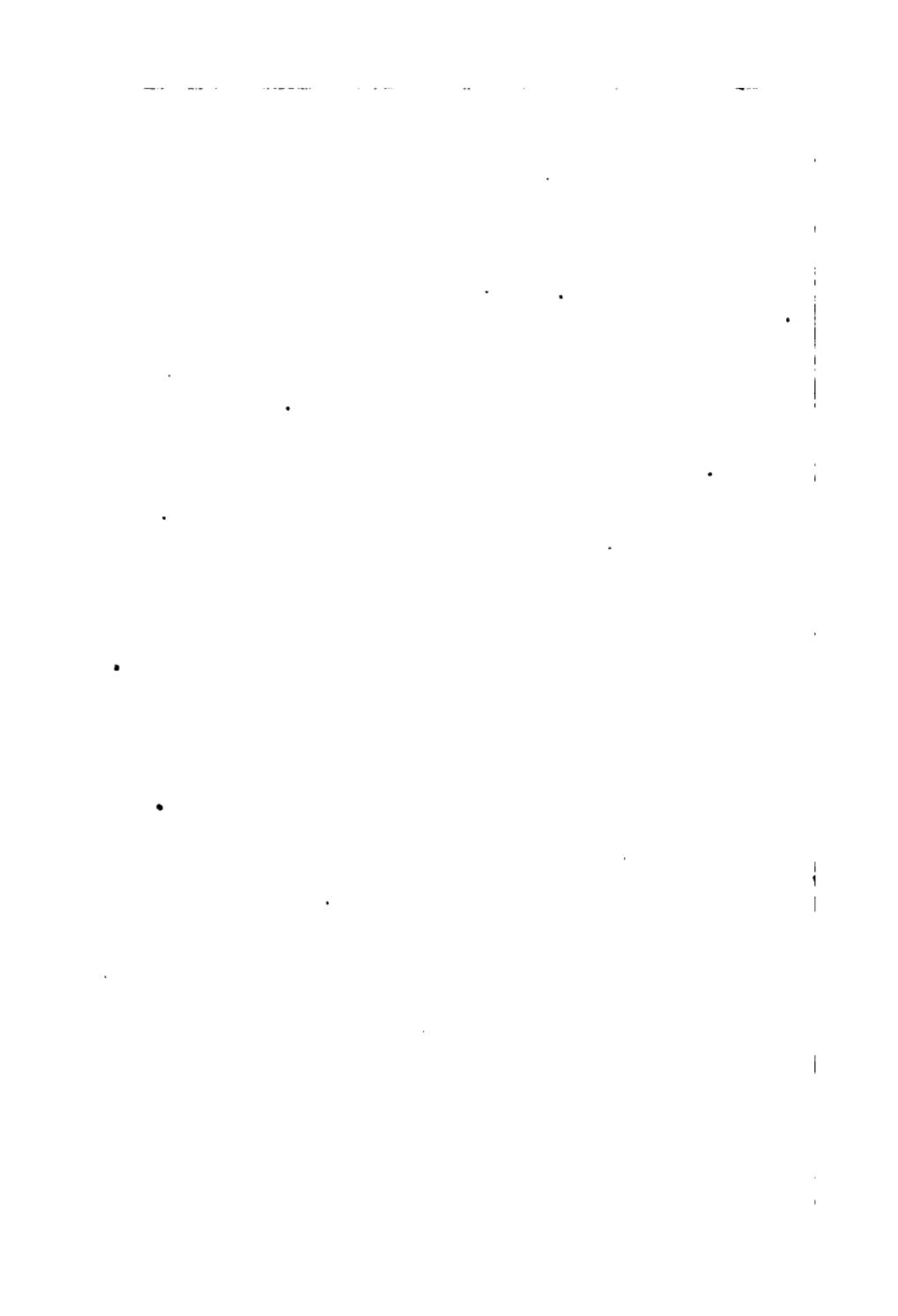
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